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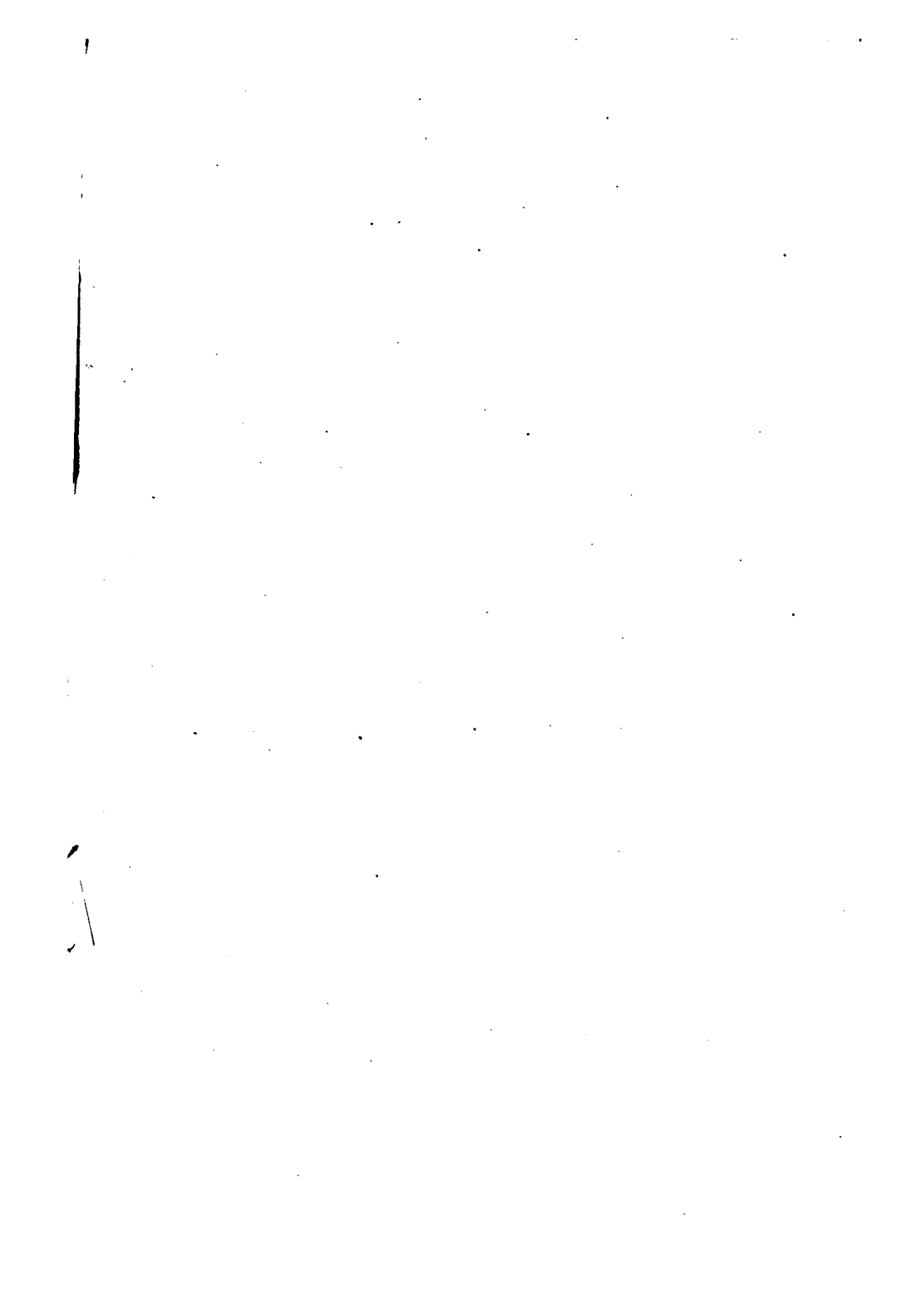
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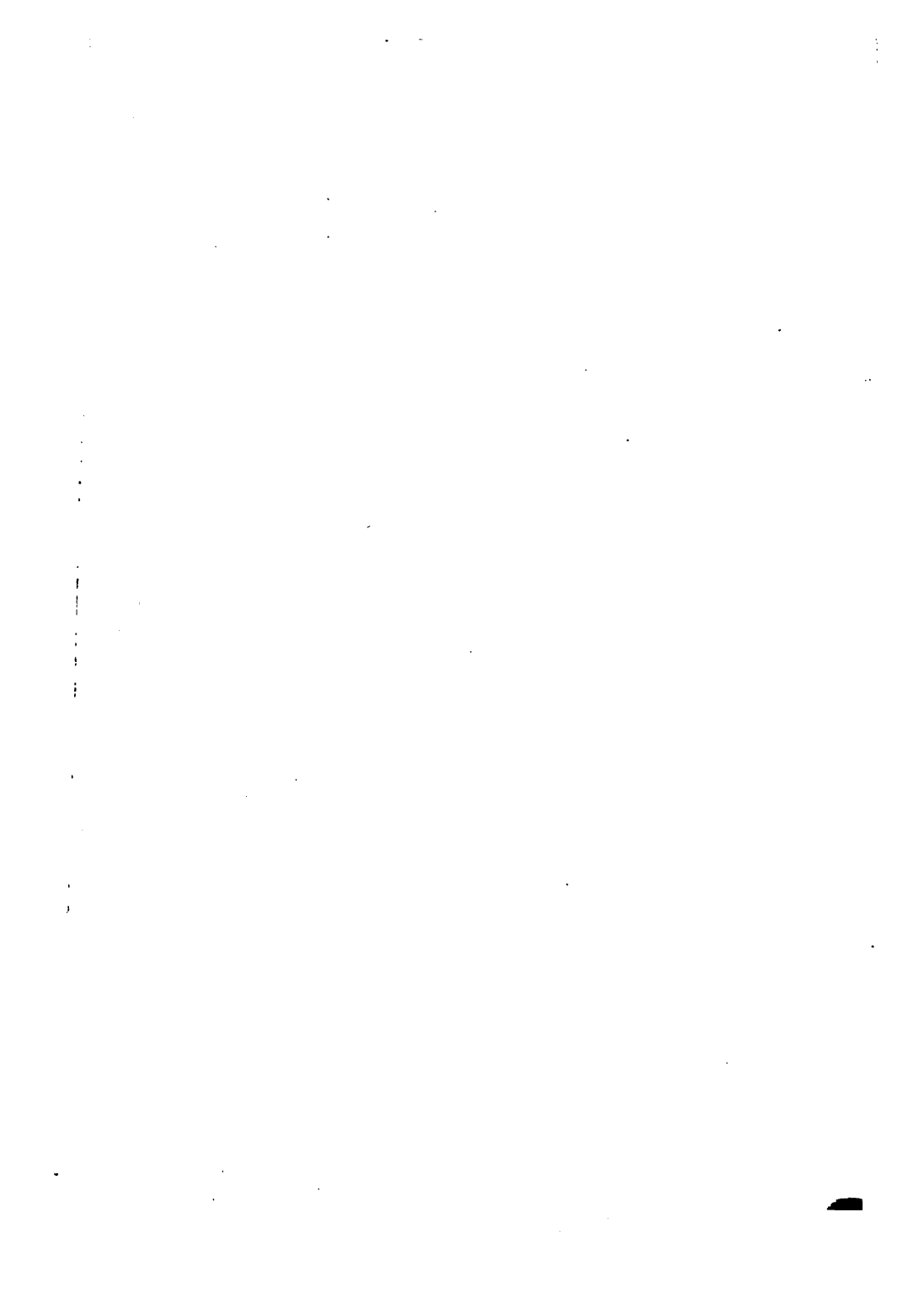
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CHAS. F. PIDGIN

LABOR;
OR,
THE MONEY-GOD!
WHICH?

LABOR;
OR,
THE MONEY - GOD!
WHICH?

A STORY OF THE TIMES

BY

Chas. Felton Pidgin

Author of "QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER," "BLENNER-
HASSETT," "THE HIDDEN MAN," "THEODOSIA," etc.



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To
The Trade Unions
of
America

PREFACE.

"I am a poor German, grown old in the service of a bad King! I have been kicked out of that service — Ach! — just for telling the truth; which is very much the end of all truth-telling, is it not? Tell lies, and Kings will reward you and make you rich and great! — but tell truth, and see what the Kings will give you for it—Kicks, and no halfpence!"
MARIE CORELLI in "Temporal Power."

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LABOR; or, The } WHICH? MONEY-GOD!

UNDER WHICH KING, BEZONIAN? SPEAK, OR DIE.
Shakespeare — King Henry IV.

CHAPTER I.

A MILL TOWN.

MELTONVILLE is in one of the State units which, welded by the written law — the Constitution — and the unwritten law of self-interest, form the American Union. Which particular unit is immaterial. The worship of Mammon has progressed to such a degree in each of them that it would be invidious to single out one as an example. Let the reader form a mental picture of the industrial conditions which surround him and, if pertinent, make the application himself.

Meltonville was a mill town; one of those combinations of unæsthetic piles of brick and mortar, their tawdriness accentuated by rambling, poorly-constructed, out-of-repair tenement houses occupied by the operatives in the malaria-ridden valley, while upon the hygienic hill loomed up the beautiful mansion of Hon. Richard Melton, ex-State Senator, and virtual owner of the town and all it contained, for when an ultimatum was reached his word was law — yea, even greater than *the law*.

Cotton cloth of a low grade was made in the Melton Mills, and low-grade work usually means low-grade pay, and consequently, industrially, low-grade men, women, and — Heaven save the mark! — children.

A high-grade proprietor can make great improvements even in an industrially low-grade town, even as a tiller of the soil can rise nearer to Heaven than one who walks upon brick sidewalks and stares at passers-by through plate-glass windows. But Richard Melton was not such an uplifter. His property had come to him, an unearned increment, from his father, and what was good enough for his father's help was good enough for his. His father said every day of his life that the good old times were better than the present, and Richard Melton felt he was doing a public service in conducting his business on good old-time principles.

"Richard, my son," asked old Joshua Melton one day, "what do they mean by this collective bargaining?"

"It means, that instead of your paying John or James what you know he is worth to you, that you must pay him what the Union to which he belongs says he is worth. If you presume to think you know better than the Union does what they are worth to you and discharge them, the Union will demand their re-instatement, and strike if you don't take them back."

"Why, how foolish!" said Joshua. "Statistics prove that our American workingmen earn more than they do in any other country, and consequently spend more."

"What of that?" replied Richard. "I have posted notice of a cut-down of ten per cent to take effect the first of next month, and I hear rumors that my help are all going out."

"What are you going to do about it, if they do strike?" asked Joshua.

“Close the mills. If they prefer to starve rather than work they are free-born American citizens, but they won’t get credit at my store.”

There were two grocery, or rather general, stores in Meltonville. One was run, ostensibly, by Parker & Buskirk, but the capital was supplied by Richard Melton, and the partners (?) received a salary, and a small commission. Parker & Buskirk gave credit to the mill-hands for they knew their money was secure — or rather, their employer’s money. The mill-hands were not physically coerced to trade with Parker & Buskirk, but, mentally, each operative knew that it was for his financial interest to do so. It had happened that a weaver, named Deming, who was outspoken on labor matters, had had a controversy with Mr. Parker on the subject of arbitration. Both disputants became angry, and Mr. Deming transferred his trade to Mark Thorpe who kept the other store. At the next pay day Mr. Deming got his dismissal, although he was one of the most competent weavers in the mill.

Mr. Horace Sparks, the Trial Justice, was on the best of terms with the mill magnate, while Paul Glidden, the other attorney, had never been invited to Mr. Melton’s and the owner thereof did not notice him when they met upon the street. When Mr. Glidden made his advent in Meltonville he was injudicious enough to bring suit against Mr. Richard Melton for some back pay which a discharged operative said was due him. Mr. Glidden won his case and future local obscurity thereby. He endeavored to obtain a position as teacher in the village school, but, for some reason, was unsuccessful.

We have outlined the scene of a coming industrial

conflict, and a few of the probable participants therein. It is the old, ever-recurring, contest between LABOR and THE MONEY-GOD!

CHAPTER II.

A TRADE UNION MEETING.

MR. ISRAEL WASHINGTON BEACH was not a regular member of Weavers' Union No. 34. His duties consisted in wheeling bales of cotton goods up to the heavy wagons which conveyed them to the railroad for shipment. He had been made an honorary member, not because of his oratorical ability, but because he was willing, for a very modest stipend, to take care of the rooms occupied by the Union — in fact, act as janitor.

Israel had been born a slave in the South; freed by the Lincoln Proclamation, he soon made himself "contraband," and found his way to the North when but a boy. Uneducated, he could work only with his hands, and hand-work, nowadays, with but few exceptions, is the lowest paid form of labor. But Israel had inherited no high-flown ideas of living, and, with his small compensation, lived within his financial bounds, and had money in — he never told anybody where it was.

He insisted that George Washington was his great grandfather. "But why did you take the name Israel?" asked Deming.

"I didn't take it, it was giv to me."

"Who gave it to you?"

"A Yankee soldier. When I got into the Union camp a soldier says 'What's your name?' I said, Dunno."

"'Where's your master?' he asked me."

"He's done lost, says I."

"He laughed, and said, 'You must be one of the lost tribe of Israel,' and Israel I've been ever since."

"Where did you get the name Beach?" continued Deming.

"Oh, that was my last master's name, and he was a good boss, too — worth a dozen of Massa Melton."

Mr. Beach had lighted the gas, swept out the room, and arranged the chairs on the platform and the settees in the hall. The members of the Union entered singly, in couples, and often in groups, some standing and engaged in earnest conversation, while others seated themselves and chatted or waited quietly for the opening of the meeting.

Mr. David Bentwich, the President, rapped upon the table, but, before speaking, waited until all were seated.

"This meeting will please come to order. The Secretary will read the records of the last meeting."

Mr. Jacob Gulson sprang to his feet.

"Mr. President."

"Mr. Gulson."

"I move, Mr. President," said Mr. Gulson, "that the usual order of business be suspended, and that we proceed to choose a committee to visit Mr. Melton in relation to the proposed cut-down."

"Second the motion," yelled Mr. Beach.

Mr. Thomas Potter, the Secretary, who had arisen at the President's command, and who held the open book of records in his hand, preparatory to reading, said:

"Mr. President, Mr. Beach, as an honorary member, has the privilege of the floor, but no right to vote."

"Second the motion," came from a score of voices.

"You hear Brother Gulson's motion," said the President, "which is seconded."

Mr. Beach was not satisfied.

"I don't want the floor, sah, unless I can back what

I say with a vote. The amendments to the Constitution give me the right to vote."

Mr. Abel Deming arose: "Mr. President, is this motion debatable?"

"Certainly," replied the President.

Mr. Beach saw an opening: "Debatable? Of course it is. I should think so. This motion, sah, is a worm in the bud, a cat in the meal, a weak invention of the enemy. Yes, sah, the maker of that commotion is an enemy to our cause."

Mr. Beach paused, out of breath.

"Mr. President," said Mr. Gulson, "the gentleman is laboring under a misapprehension — my motion was only tentative —"

Mr. Beach interposed: "No, sah, 'fore God, I never was under a tent but once in my life, and that was in the wah. I repel the *caluminous* assertion."

The President strove to explain: "Brother Gulson means that you are mistaken as regards the intent of his motion."

"That's what he said. I heard him. He said I was laboring under a tent, and I work in the mill with the rest of you."

"Allow me to explain," said Mr. Gulson. "My wish was to postpone the reading of the records until later in the evening."

"And what for?" cried Mr. Beach. "I know your game, sah. You was afraid to go back to the deluge because you knew you'd find a colored man in the ark with the rest of 'em. No matter how we was born, we are now free and equal — just as good as a mill owner. Den, why in Heaven's name don't we do sumfin? You've

planted, and you've hoed — now, what shall the harvest be?"

"I rise to a point of order," said Mr. Deming.

Mr. Beach was determined to finish his remarks: "Dis-order, sah. You'se an interruptionist, sah."

The members were not averse to giving Brother Beach opportunities to air his ill-digested eloquence, but an important matter was to be decided, and it was thought it was time for Mr. Beach to subside; so there were loud cries from all parts of the hall: "Shut up." "Cut it short." "Sit on him." "Take a tumble." "Scat," and other cries equally indicative of a desire to attend to the regular business of the meeting.

Mr. Beach arose superior to such interruptions.

"For Hebben's sake, lemme finish. Give me a chance, gentlemen. The spirit of liberty am frozen in your white breasts. The black man has more liberty than he wants, and has some to spare."

The President exclaimed in a loud tone: "Mr. Beach, sit down!"

"I was just goin' to, but I must say —"

"Time's up," said the President.

"Just one minute, Mr. Chairman."

"Not one second, Mr. Beach."

"Lemme only say dat —"

"Sit down, Mr. Beach, or you will be expelled from the room."

"Liberty is dead, sah! Lemme —"

There were cries of "Throw him out." "Put him on ice." "Question," and the persistent orator was finally forced into his seat, ejaculating after he was seated — "Lemme!"

The President surveyed the now quiet and attentive assemblage: "The question is on the adoption of Mr. Gulson's motion. Those in favor say 'Aye.'"

There was a loud chorus of "Ayes," but Mr. Beach's "No" was heard above the din.

"Those opposed, 'No.'"

Mr. Beach yelled "No!"

"It is a vote, and I will now name the members of the committee. Brothers Gulson, Deming, and Potter."

Mr. Deming addressed the chair: "Mr. President."

"Mr. Deming."

"In accepting your appointment as a member of this committee, I am filled with an agitation that I will not try to conceal. I see signs of an impending crisis in our relations with the Money-God of this town. Our colored brother struck the keynote, but in a bungling fashion."

Mr. Beach strove to rise, but was pulled back into his seat, uttering a final "Lemme!"

Mr. Deming continued: "Brother Beach's mouth is bigger than his brain, so the little he says, he says strong. He asks 'Why don't we do something?'"

Mr. Beach cried "Lemme!" but further speech on his part was silenced by a broad palm over his mouth.

Mr. Deming concluded: "We will try once more. We will go to Mr. Melton to claim a living wage for ourselves — American freemen that we are. I will give you his answer now. We shall come away like whipped curs, with a contemptuous refusal, aye, with threats for an answer."

The secretary, Mr. Thomas Potter, called by his companions the "level-headed," arose:

"Mr. President! I don't believe in prejudging any man."

Let Mr. Melton answer for himself. It is not for us to put words in his mouth. Least said, soonest mended, and I move we now adjourn until to-morrow evening, when your committee will report progress."

There was a general cry of "Seconded," and without waiting for a formal putting of the question the meeting broke up. Ten minutes later the members who had not made their way home were gathered upon the street corners still discussing the probable outcome of the committee's visit. Mr. Beach lost no time in closing up the room, and was soon upon the street, and an hour later a passer-by might have heard that word of appeal—"Lemme!"—indicating that Brother Beach had not yet reached the close of his argument.

CHAPTER III.

THE "GOOD OLD TIMES."

HER silver-white hair was parted primly in the centre and brushed back demurely behind her ears, being gathered in a small pug at the back. On the top of her head was a dainty black lace cap, evidently not of her own making. She sat in an old-fashioned rocking chair, moving vigorously backwards and forwards, counting stitches on a blue woolen stocking she was knitting. Where she sat was the kitchen of Richard Melton's mansion, and she was a lady of the old school, and Richard's mother.

The counting being completed, she leaned over her work intently. If her thoughts could have been translated in audible form, they would have run thus:

"I suppose a new-fangled knitting machine would do this heel while I'm thinking about it. One, two, three, four, five, six— Thank fortune I was raised in the good old times when a gal that couldn't knit a stocking by hand, heel, toe and all, would have had to look at least twice for a husband." She arose, went to a table, and placed her knitting upon it. "Guess I'll let the pesky thing alone until after breakfast. It beats all how machinery is taking the work out of honest folks' hands. Sewing machines, and knitting machines, and washing machines, and bread kneaders— Heaven knows there are plenty of bread needers in these times. Even beds, nowadays, are built on wires so they'll pop into place when folks get up, and save turning and punching up the feathers."

She heaved a satisfied sigh. "But they're mighty comfortable, anyhow."

Looking up, she saw her husband, who had entered quietly.

"Why, Pa, you up as early as this? 'Tain't six o'clock yet."

"Why not, Tryphena? I believe in statistics and mean to profit by their warnings."

"Warnings, Joshua? You haven't had a warning, have you?"

Pa Melton laughed. "Lots of 'em, Phenie. Statistics show that the greatest number of people die early in the morning, say 'tween four and six o'clock."

Ma Melton nodded. "I allus noticed, when I was a nussin' that they lingered on till near about breakfast time."

"Kerzacktly, Ma. Figures don't lie. Consequently, we recapitulate and find that to save dying between four and six we must —"

His wife, astonished, exclaimed "What?"

"Why, we must be up early and attending to business, so when the reaper comes he'll find the bed empty."

Ma Melton exclaimed solemnly, "Why, Joshua, I never thought of that afore."

"Of course not — why should you? Women folks never were much on statistics, but I'm into 'em deep."

He went to a window and looked out. "The birds are up and pecking about. The early bird may catch the worm, but the worms won't get the early bird, that's me."

Both turned and looked as Huldah entered, her hair in disorder, while she rubbed her eyes so as to get them wide open.

"Good morning, Huldah," said Ma Melton pleasantly. Huldah yawned. "Mornin' M-a-a-r-m."

The old lady smiled: "Hain't got your eyes open yet, have yer?"

Huldah rejoined, somewhat spitefully: "It's a big nuisance to have to get up so early in the morning, anyway." Then she asked: "Has Tom been for the keys, yet?"

Pa Melton chuckled: "Guess he stayed so long last night when he brought them back that he's sleepy this morning, too. Eh, Huldah?"

Huldah avoided the imputation: "Well, I wish they'd catch the feller that tried to set the mills on fire, and then we could rest easy and have our natural sleep."

"Why don't Tom keep the keys with him?" asked Ma Melton.

Huldah answered quickly: "Because Mr. Melton is afraid somebody will steal them from him — knock him down, or *garroot* him, or something like that."

Ma Melton shook her head sadly. "In the good old times, when I was a girl, we didn't have to lock everything up, and then watch it, did we Joshua?"

"That's so, mother; but statistics prove that in proportion to the number of folks there was just as much cussedness then as there is now."

"Well, I don't believe it, for one, Joshua Melton."

"Of course, you don't Tryphena. As I said before, women don't take to statistics naturally. They allus lie like sin about their ages when the census-taker comes 'round."

Like a discreet woman, Ma Melton changed the subject. "Come, Pa, let's take our morning walk."

"The dew ain't off the grass, yet, Phenie."

"I don't care. My boots ain't got paper soles. Come, or we shan't see the sun rise over the hill." Arm in arm they went into the garden.

Huldah looked after them, and laughed. "I guess your son won't rise for several hours yet. I'll bet that Richard Melton, when he was a youngster, bossed the old folks 'round. He ain't forgotten how. Everything in this house minds him except the flies and mosquitoes."

She finally succeeded in gathering her refractory hair into a knot, and tied it with a piece of blue ribbon. Next she took a clean white apron from a drawer — then glanced at the clock. "Why — nearly six." She ran to a window. "He'll be late. Where can that fellow be?"

Her question was heard by Mr. Thomas Potter himself who had made a noiseless entrance. He stood for a moment enjoying her evident solicitude, then he said quietly: "Thinking of me, Huldah?"

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN LOVERS DISAGREE.

HULDAH turned quickly and saw Tom's inquisitive smile: "Oh, you're there, are you?"

Tom repeated his question, for lover-like, he wished an answer: "You was thinkin' of me, wan't you, Huld'y?"

"No, I wasn't thinking of you at all, Tom Potter. You mustn't think yourself so important."

Tom was persistent: "Well, you was waitin' for me. I know you was."

"I always have to. I couldn't do less."

Tom took several steps towards her: "I wish I had nothin' else to do except wait for you."

"You'd have to wait a mighty long time, Mr. Potter. Here are your keys."

Huldah held them out to him, but he made no effort to take them. She dangled them by the ring, then threw them upon the floor.

As Tom picked them up, he said: "No great hurry about the keys. Your clock's fast. Time enough. Nearly ten minutes to spare."

Huldah turned to leave the room. "You'd better go right along, Mr. Potter. Something may hinder you upon the road."

"No danger, Miss Simpson. The girls ain't out yet."

Huldah pouted perceptibly: "No doubt you'd spare ten minutes if you met one."

"Not a bit of doubt of it. But, Huld'y, let's stop foolin'.

I have met the girl I wanted to, and that's you, and I'd like to spare my ten minutes with you."

"What on earth can you have to say to me that will take ten minutes?"

"Oh, lots. I've got something very particular to say to you, Huldý. Something very particular."

Huldah seated herself and began rocking: "Well, go ahead, Mr. Potter, and come to the point at once."

Tom thought to himself: "Gosh! Can she suspect anything? I thought she was kinder stuffy at first."

"Ah-h-e-m!"

"What did you say, Huldý?"

"Nothing."

"I thought you spoke."

"Well, I didn't."

"What would you have said if you had?"

"I should have asked you why you didn't sit down instead of standing 'round on one leg like a big goose."

Tom placed his hand on the back of a chair: "Am I to understand that as an invite?"

"You might as well sit down as stand up. I said so before."

Tom threw his hat on the floor and pushing a chair over it, sat down, timidly, on its edge.

"Well, I guess you're right, Huldý, and I accept your cordial invitation with thanks."

"Don't distress yourself, Mr. Potter. Now you're sitting down like a gentleman, perhaps you will tell your *very particular* business with me."

"Huldý, don't call me Mr. Potter."

"Why not? It's your name."

"I know 'tis. Mr. Potter for *long*, Tom for *short*."

—
‘Well, I’ve known you for *long*.’

‘I ain’t joking, Huldy. How would you like it to be eternally called Mrs. Potter —’

Huldy broke in quickly: “Tain’t a supposable case.”

“Oh, it ain’t? I wish it was, Huldy.”

In his excited state of mind, Tom forgot his proximity to the edge of the chair, and he found himself sitting on the floor, his hat beneath him. Huldah, who was growing nervous herself, laughed immoderately. Tom arose slowly, surveying his damaged head-piece, and endeavored to gather his scattered thoughts. Finally, he said:

“That name business wasn’t *exactly* the *particular* business I had in mind, Huldy, but it was kinder near to it, though. I’m coming to it, directly.” He looked at his watch, then at the clock.

“Plenty of time, Huldy. Don’t you want me to set your clock back? Just six minutes fast by my time.”

“Mr. Melton regulates the clock.”

“Well, I think it needs a better regulator.”

“Perhaps you’d better speak to him about it.”

“Guess I will. Thank you for the hint, Huldy.”

During the conversation Huldah had changed her seat several times, and Ma Melton’s rocking chair being unoccupied it attracted Tom’s attention and he seated himself therein.

“Grandmother Melton sits in this chair when she’s a-knittin’, don’t she?”

There was frigidity in Huldah’s tone when she replied: “Mrs. Tryphena Melton often occupies that chair.”

“So I thought. Fact, I’ve seen her.”

He stamped his foot upon a mat, and a cloud of dust

arose. "These mats are fearful dusty, Huldly. They need shaking and beating."

"Shall I speak to Miss Myrtle about them?"

"I wish you would, Huldly. I'll do 'em cheap, after work at night. Don't forget it, for I'm saving up so's I can get married."

Huldah was now worked up to a high state of nervous tension, and she exclaimed, involuntarily: "Phew!"

"Hot here, isn't it? That ere range is hotter'n a furnace fire. Speakin' of fires, do you think Deming is mad because the boss discharged him, and is prowling 'round to set the mills on fire? He talks hot at the Union."

"I shouldn't wonder. He'd a right to get mad, though. If he wants to trade with Thorpe it's nobody's business."

"The constables will make it hot for him if they get a point on him."

"He may make it hot for us before they get him."

"He may, Huldly, that's a fact. Speaking of making it hot — you know Deacon Shotwell?"

"Yes, I'm in his Bible class."

"Well, the other day the Deacon drove up to the mill with a load of brimstone, or sulphur as the bookkeeper calls it. I saw him, and without remembering that he was a church member, I yelled out — Got a little hell of your own, haven't you? He looked 'round, you know he's cross-eyed bad, and he said — 'Guess you'd think so, Potter, if you was sittin' on it, and it got afire.' Pretty good for a deacon, wan't it? He told me afterwards that he was going to take the money he made on that brimstone and put up a monument for his first wife — Samantha Briggs, that was."

"He'd better keep it for himself. Nobody'll put a monument over him."

Tom laughed: "Just what I told him, to the word."

Tom was so pleased with the rejoinder he had given the deacon that he began to rock so violently that he tipped the chair over backwards, the keys dropping from his pocket.

"There, now," cried Huldah: "You came near breaking your neck."

As Tom got up, he said: "And you wouldn't have cared, either. That chair ought to be fixed. 'Tain't safe."

"Mr. Melton isn't quite as rich as Mr. Astor, but perhaps he'll refurnish the house to please you, Mr. Potter. I'll go and tell him your wishes." Huldah had one hand upon the door-knob, when Tom grasped the other.

"Don't go, Huldah. Just a minute more. I've just got to that particular business."

CHAPTER V.

AT LAST!

HULDAH released the door-knob reluctantly, and stood uncertain as to what course to pursue.

"True as Gospel, Huldy, I won't keep you in the dark any longer."

"Well, I'm glad you've got 'round to it at last," said she, as she seated herself in Ma Melton's rocking chair.

Tom began inauspiciously: "Parson Dean's daughter gave me a riddle the other day."

Huldy rose from her chair: "I don't want to hear anything about Parson Dean's daughter or her riddles."

Tom stood up: "I thought not, so I ain't going to tell yer. You know just what kind of a girl she is, don't you, Huldy?"

"You ought to, Mr. Potter. You talk to her enough down behind the barn."

"That's where I saw her the other day. I showed her a piece I saw in the paper about schoolma'ams. You know she teaches school. Well, the paper said that schoolma'ams lost nine chances in ten to get married. I guess Sally Dean's big riddle will be to find a husband, don't you, Huldy?"

"I don't worry my mind about such things."

Tom sidled up to Huldah, and smiled beseechingly:

"Don't you kinder lay awake nights thinking about gittin' married?"

"No, I'm no such fool. I *never* think about it."

"Well, Huldy, I'm just such a fool. I think about it 'bout all the time. I've been thinking of it every second since I've been here."

"Your words didn't show your thoughts."

"You're right there, Huldy. I know I've been beating 'round the bush — thinking like thunder, but couldn't git the right words, but I can now."

"You'd better hurry up. Your ten minutes are gone and your very particular business ain't out yet." Huldah walked to the window and looked out.

Tom thought: "That girl's heart is all right if I only knew just how to hit it. The book! I forgot the book." He took a small pamphlet from his pocket and turned the leaves rapidly. 'How to Propose, by One Who has been There.' Here it is. 'Hint No. I. Call attention to some object in the room and lead the conversation gradually on.' I'll try that. Huldy!"

Without turning her head, she asked: "Are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready now." He took the thermometer down from its hook and held it up before the young girl's face.

"Do you see that thermometer?"

"Yes, of course I do. What of it?"

"Do you know what part of that thermometer is like you, Huldy?"

"No, nor you either."

"You're like the glass tube — it's bright and solid, and always keeps cool. I'm like the quicksilver, for when you seem to like my company I pop up to boiling point, but when you act as though my room was better than my company, I slump down to zero."

"What nonsense, Mr. Potter. But what good does

your popping up and slumping down do me? I only waste time when I might be doing something useful."

Suiting the action to the word she took up the unfinished stocking left by Ma Melton and began knitting vigorously.

Tom pondered, then consulted the book again. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady.' Maxims are easy to read but darned hard to put in practice. Huldy!"

She glanced upward.

"Huldy, gaze on that clock. That's a picture of a happy marriage. See the hour hand, which is the wife, going a short distance every hour, while the minute hand, which is the husband, goes twelve times as far in the same time."

Huldah laughed incredulously and said spitefully: "That would be a happy marriage. I guess there are mighty few men nowadays who go twelve times as far in an hour as their wives do. It's my opinion the boot is on the other leg," and she resumed her knitting.

Tom referred again to his book. "That didn't do the job. 'Hint No. 2. Call attention to some of the beauties of nature and make an application to home surroundings.' I'll try that style. Come to the window, Huldy, for just a minute, — only one little minute."

When they reached the window he said: "See the gorgeous sun, Huldy, rising slowly up into the azure heavens. It lights up millions of happy homes. When we're married, we'll have a sun in our home."

"Tom Potter, I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself." Apparently very much vexed she resumed her knitting.

Tom took a final look at the book. "Confound the beauties of nature; might have done better with the moon. 'Third Hint: Describe your mansion, horses, carriages, bank account, etc.' Huldy, listen to me, just once more."

"I'm getting tired of your fooling."

"This morning, Huldy, I passed a beautiful cottage hidden in a grove of trees. It was clapboarded, with red doors, and had a nice barn painted and blinded. There was a place to keep a hen, and a brood of cows. Can stall a lamb and pasture a couple of pigs. It had two kitchens, four cellars, and a sleeping room in the basement. Could we not be happy in such a paradise?"

"Are you losing all your senses, Tom Potter, or are you a natural born fool?"

"Nature never makes a man a complete fool, Huldy. It gives him the raw material, and he works it up."

"You've been pretty busy at it this morning. You need a *gardeeen* or a wife to look after you. Good morning, Mr. Potter. I can't waste any more time on a man who doesn't know his own mind."

Huldah's patience had reached its limit. She threw the door open wide, and standing in the doorway laughed derisively at poor Tom. He rushed forward and threw himself on his knees before her. As he did so he threw his book of matrimonial "Hints" to the farther side of the room.

"Drat the book! Wait Huldy, wait! 'Twon't take half a second now. I've got it. Wait Huldy! I love you, and always will. That's proposin' accordin' to Tom Potter."

"Get up, Mr. Potter."

"No, Huldy, *Mr. Potter* stays right here."

"Get up! Somebody's coming." Then she spoke pleadingly: "Get up, Tom."

"Tom! Huldy? Then you do love me?"

"Well, I don't absolutely hate you, Tom."

Tom sprang to his feet and tried to embrace Huldy, but she stepped back beyond his reach.

"Will you marry me, Huldy?"

"That's a horse of another color, Mr.—Tom."

"I know it is. Marrying is better than loving, and it is a natural consequence."

"Not always. Some women look ahead nowadays before making the jump. How much do you earn, Tom?"

Mr. Potter was astonished at this mercenary inquiry.

"Earn? Earn! What's that got to do with it?"

"Everything, Tom. I've had to *labor* all my life. When I marry I want a little *capital* in the firm."

Tom's voice broke a little as he replied: "My love, my heart, and my hands are my capital, Huldy."

"The love may fly, the heart grow cold, the hands be stilled by sickness or death. Have you any money in the bank, Tom?"

"I did have, but that long spell of short time, together with the other cut-down ate up most every dollar."

Huldy grasped both of Tom's hands in hers: "Tom, you are a dear, good, noble fellow, and I love you better than any man I ever knew. I've been told how much of your money has gone to help others, but we mustn't marry until our prospects are better. Poor men and poor women ought not to rush into marriage with their eyes shut, and trust to the future to support the family."

"But I'll save up something before there's three in the family."

"I guess you'll begin saving before there's two, if I have my say, and I think I will. But, go along, Tom. You're late now. You'll see me again, never fear."

"I rather guess my *ten minutes* are up. Good-bye, Huldy."

"Good-bye, Tom."

Tom was not satisfied with the way the compact had been completed. It had not been *sealed* as was customary, if the story books were true. Was it maidenly modesty, or a disposition not to go too far until money considerations were satisfactory? He opened the outside door and a sudden gust of wind blew something in his eye. He had an inspiration. He put his hand to his eye and actually groaned.

"What's the matter, Tom, dear Tom — have you hurt your eye?"

"Yes, Huldy, something's in it. It hurts awful."

"Let me look at the poor boy's eye. Perhaps his Huldy can cure it."

Huldy lifted his eyelid with her finger and Tom winced, but drew nearer. Then he put both hands on her shoulders, and drew her closer to him.

"Blow in it, Huldy."

Being shorter in stature than Tom, Huldy was obliged to stand on tiptoe, and Tom gallantly put his arms about her as a support. The temptation was one that mortal man could not resist. He drew her close to him, gave her an old-fashioned hug, and two resounding kisses before she broke away from him. With his hand upon the outside door, he cried: "That's courtin' accordin' to Tom Potter. Good-bye, Huldy."

"Good-bye, you saucy thing."

Huldy looked at the clock, then ran to the window. She could see Tom trudging down the long lane that led to the mill. He turned and threw kisses to her, which she threw back again. A young man, faultlessly dressed, with a light overcoat over his arm, and carrying a traveling bag, had entered. Huldy gave expression to her hitherto suppressed feelings: "I guess you're late, young man."

It was not the young man whom Huldy had in mind who replied: "I was afraid I was a little too early."

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTRUDER.

"WHAT a morning of surprises" was Huldah's thought as she turned and faced the intruder. She surveyed him critically from his shining silk hat to his equally shining shoes, and then remarked in a tone far removed from polite —

"I wasn't talking to you, sir."

Mr. John Carpenter proceeded to hang his overcoat carefully over the back of a chair, placed his hat upon the table, and deposited his traveling bag upon the floor before he replied: "Excuse me, Miss. I presume your words were addressed to the individual whom I saw tearing down the steps as I came up the path."

"Tearing down the steps," cried Huldah. "He left enough for you to come up on, it seems."

As she spoke she moved away from him. Mr. Carpenter thought: "She's sharp. I must sharpen up a bit myself." Turning to Huldah, he said: "My dear young lady, I beg pardon for my evidently unwelcome intrusion. Arriving by an early train I had to choose between lingering at the station or entering thus inopportunistically. I am an old friend of the family, but have usually visited at their city residence. The cool, shady path invited me or I should have gone to the front door. I trust I have not incommoded you greatly. I will walk in the garden a while." He took his hat from the table.

"I suppose, sir,—you have come to see Mr. Melton."

"Not Mr. Melton alone. He and his greatest treasure."

"His mills?"

"No, Miss, not his mills, but his daughter."

"She isn't up yet. I'm her maid. I'll tell her you are here as soon as she rings for me."

Mr. Carpenter's thoughts were busy: "Her maid. For country use. Not much like the adorable Francine in the city. But this one is sharp, shrewd and pretty."

"Your name, sir, if you please," was Huldah's request.

"Before I give it let me again ask pardon for my imprudent words to you. I thought you were a visitor here. Let's kiss and make up."

Mr. Carpenter put his arm around Huldah, and tried to kiss her, but she pushed him away, violently.

"Impudent words, you mean. You wouldn't try to make up in such a way if you really thought I was what you call a lady."

"You're too particular."

Huldah answered this ungentlemanly remark with red cheeks and flashing eyes. "Yes I am particular. I have heard that foreign lords make a practice of kissing servants, and I suppose you New York swells think it can be done as easily here as to turn up your trousers when it rains in London. If you were a gentleman you would know that the person of an American working girl is as sacred as that of any lady in the land."

"Phew! But you must be a princess, and belong to the blood royal."

"I don't know what you mean, but my blood is *roiled*, and will be every time I see you."

Huldah's antagonism attracted instead of repelling Mr. Carpenter. He was determined now to come off victor, and he made a vigorous attempt to embrace her.

"Go away! Go away from me, you apology for a gentleman, or I'll scream."

"I'll stop your cries with a kiss."

Huldah faced him, defiantly: "You just touch me and see if I don't yell as loud as I can."

Mr. Carpenter advanced towards her, but Huldah ran behind a chair, then around the table several times; finally she darted towards the door which led into the garden, and, as she opened it, was confronted by Mr. Thomas Potter. She recoiled, astonished, but, recovering herself, exclaimed: "Where did you come from, Mr. Potter?"

Mr. Carpenter walked to the window and looked out, whistling a comic opera air in a low key.

Tom kept his eyes on Carpenter, while answering Huldah's inquiry. "I got way down to the mills, but when I put my hand in my pocket them confounded keys wasn't there. I came back, looking everywhere"—he glanced towards the table—"there they are now, under the table—it looks as though it had been moved from where it was." He picked up the keys, and then asked: "Huldy, what was that young feller about, eh?"

"Nothing."

"I know better. You look sheepish, and he's afraid to look me square in the face. What was he trying to do? I've a right to know. Can't you trust me, Huldy?"

This appeal was too much, and Huldah began to cry.

Between her sobs she managed to say: "He — tried — to kiss— me!"

"He's a man of sense. But he's no business stealing my fruit." As he removed his coat he said loud enough for Mr. Carpenter to hear: "I'll just dust his coat for him."

"No, no, Tom," cried Huldah — "please don't. He's Miss Myrtle's young man. I ain't afraid of him."

"Nor I, nuther, Huldy." Tom placed his hand on Mr. Carpenter's shoulder: "Here, you, young feller."

Mr. Carpenter stared at him in a supercilious way. "Were you addressing your remarks to me?"

"No, I was undressing. What have you been bothering this young lady for? What did you try to kiss her for?"

"Is that any of your business?"

"Do you hear *that*, Huldy? Any of *my* business? I should think it was! This young lady is to be Mrs. Thomas Potter."

Mr. Carpenter looked at the young couple quizzically: "Ah! I see now. I wasn't aware the young lady's affections were permanently engaged. I'm very sorry."

Tom saw the other side of the question: "Well, I suppose you knew your affections were engaged to Miss Myrtle. What'll you do after marriage if you act this way afore?"

Huldy interposed: "Don't say any more about it, please, Tom. He didn't kiss me after all."

"No, darn him, but he meant to. I've a good mind to tell Miss Myrtle about this whole business."

Mr. Carpenter now realized that there might be a serious side to his escapade.

"No, I beg you will not. I will pay you to keep silent." He took out a well-filled pocket book. "Name your price for my little pleasantry, and it shall be paid."

Tom grew indignant. "Mr. What's-your-name, I could have excused you for trying to kiss Huldý for I know she's mighty sweet, but when you offer me money to pay for it, you show you meant it for an insult and not for fun. God knows, I want money, but I haven't got so low yet as to sell my future wife's kisses. Young man, you've got to do the handsome thing."

"How?" asked Mr. Carpenter, realizing that he had struck a human hornet's nest.

"You must apologize," said Tom sternly, "you must apologize to both of us."

"I acknowledge I tried to kiss this young lady"—

Huldý interjected, spitefully: "But you didn't!"

Tom added: "No, sir, you didn't come it. Put *that* in your apology."

Mr. Carpenter bowed; he saw an ancient but effective way of settling the difficulty: "With pleasure, Mr. Potter. I acknowledge I tried to kiss this young lady — and failed in the attempt. I am sorry for it, and"—turning to Huldah — "I beg your pardon."

Tom cried: "That's fair. I'm satisfied. We are both satisfied, ain't we, Huldý? That's politeness accordin' to Tom Potter."

Huldý thought it was time to close the trying scene: "Go, go right along, Tom. You are late now."

"I'm going, Huldý, but I've got just one word to say to Mr. What's-his-name. Young feller, I ought to have kicked you for offering that money. The 'pology didn't say nothing about that!"

CHAPTER VII.

COUSIN CHARLIE.

THE day before Mr. Thomas Potter's successful proposal for the hand and heart of Miss Huldah Simpson, and Mr. John Carpenter's unsuccessful attempt to steal a kiss from the future Mrs. Potter, the Melton household had been seated at breakfast at nine o'clock; the lunch hour was two, and at seven the principal meal of the day — a course dinner.

The family consisted of four members: Mr. Joshua Melton, a retired cotton goods manufacturer; his wife, Tryphena; his only son, Richard, and his grand-daughter, Myrtle, a young lady just past her nineteenth birthday. Although Mr. Joshua Melton has been named first, his son Richard was the owner of the mansion, of the Melton Mills, the greater part of the village of Meltonville, and the lord paramount of all that appertained thereto. He was of medium height, stoutly built, with a florid face indicative of good living, a square-cut jaw, bright, piercing eyes, and had a look of command which inspired fear rather than confidence, and a desire to follow his leadership. When he walked he put his hands out before him as though brushing away obstacles, and all knew the significance of this gesture. As Huldah had said, everybody minded him except the flies and mosquitoes, and they had been banished from his palatial domain by the most approved appliances for their exclusion.

Joshua and his wife, Tryphena, usually called "Phenie," had sprung from the soil, and its early influence had

never deserted them. Years of hard toil as farmer and farmer's wife had led to the slow but sure accumulation of a small competence. The proprietor of a small cotton mill had died, and having no relative to continue the business it had been sold at auction, and Joshua Melton became the purchaser. His knowledge related to cows rather than cotton, but his son Richard, then a young man of twenty-two, took to the business, and when his father had retired from active life, twenty years before our meeting with him, the mills and adjacent properties were valued at a round million. In the last twenty years Richard had doubled this sum; had tasted the joys of political life, and was quite often "mentioned" as a possible candidate for the highest gift at the disposal of the voters of his State. He was connected with many other corporations beside his own, and in the financial world no name stood higher as regarded responsibility than that of Richard Melton.

His daughter Myrtle was a dainty blue-eyed, flaxen haired maiden, deprived of a mother's love and care at the age of five years, and brought up between three contrasting forces — a democratic grandfather, a doting, good-natured grandmother, and a stern, aristocratic, inflexible-willed father, who loved her in his own way, which was not calculated to develop and nourish a responsive love in his daughter's heart.

The mansion was furnished to suit its occupants' characteristics, in some respects. The suite of rooms occupied by Joshua and his wife contained many articles of furniture, that, in earlier days, had seen service in the old farm-house, and were treasured on account of old associations more than intrinsic worth. Richard Melton's

rooms had a solid, substantial, unbending look — like the occupant. Myrtle's private parlor, boudoir, chamber and maid's room were exquisitely furnished. The decking out of her apartments was a way in which her father could show his love, and at the same time gratify that feeling of commanding satiety which many rich men and women have. To own is with them a deeper feeling than to enjoy, and for that reason the humble cottager with his scant acre takes more real pleasure in it than the landed proprietor with his extensive estate. When men and women own only that which they really enjoy, there will be a more equitable division of this world's bounty among its occupants.

On the morning in question as coffee was being served, the mail was brought in, that is, the letters for others than Mr. Richard Melton, who read his at his office at the mill. Myrtle had two from old school friends, and there was one for Mr. Joshua Melton.

"Myrtle," said he, "I left my spectacles up stairs — won't you read my letter for me?"

"Certainly, grandpa," and she laid one of her own in which she was deeply interested on the table, and came to his side.

"Who's it from, Myrtle?"

She looked at the last page and said: "Charles Melton — who is he, grandpa?"

"Charles Melton? Why, he's my brother Benjamin's son — Benjamin and his wife are both dead — Charles was their only son."

"Why, then he's father's cousin, and my second cousin. I'm so glad I've got a cousin. How old is he, grandpa?"

"He must be over sixty. Your father is five years older than he — but what does he want?"

—
“A loan, probably,” said Richard. “He’s been having trouble of some kind.”

Myrtle sat down beside her grandfather and read the letter so all could hear:

“DEAR UNCLE JOSHUA:

“You have perhaps heard that as the result of a political conspiracy I have been removed from a position in a State department with which I have been connected for thirty-four years. I cannot, within the limits of a letter, give the reasons, or rather absence of reasons, for my dismissal. I will only say that the Chief Magistrate in a personal letter frees me from any charge of dishonor or dishonesty. The political “necessity” for my dismissal I will explain to you some day, if you can grant a request I am about to make.

“You are probably aware of the fact that for some years back I have written books, which, fortunately for me, have had a large sale. I am under contract to write another, and wish to find a quiet place, where for six or eight weeks, no longer, I can escape from the interruptions of a city life, and complete my book. I shall need a good-sized room, and three meals a day — breakfast at eight, dinner at one, and a light supper at six. For such accommodations I shall be happy to pay such sum weekly as you may deem proper. To my aunt, and cousins, if I have any, and to yourself, I send my love.

“Your affectionate nephew,

“CHARLES MELTON.”

Joshua sat for a few minutes apparently in deep thought. Then he said: “What do you say, Richard? You’re the master here.”

"My cousin Charles does not seem to acknowledge that fact."

"Why, how could he, father?" cried Myrtle. "He says 'my cousins, if I have any.'"

"Does he expect we are going to change our meal times to suit his convenience?" asked Richard.

"How does he know what time we eat?" asked Myrtle, who had espoused the cause of her unknown cousin.

"I've no objection to his coming for a few weeks," said Richard, but he will have to eat in his own room, and perhaps it would be as well for him to pay in advance. You can fix the price, Myrtle. I hope John won't be jealous," and with this nearest approach to levity of which he had ever been guilty, he arose and left the room.

Mrs. Tryphena Melton had listened, but had said nothing. As soon as her son had gone, her good-nature led to prolific speech. "I tell you, what we'll do Myrtle. There's that big room out in the ell that Richard used for a library until his was furnished by that man from Paris. Charles can have that, and if he's a writer he'll bring lots of books with him, and there's a desk in there that Richard used before he had that table made. And about his meals, our servants don't want for anything, and his meal times are about the same as theirs."

"I wish he could eat with us," said Myrtle, "I want to hear him tell stories. But I'll go and visit him often — I'll take care of his room. I'm so glad I've got a real cousin. Are you going to write to him right off, grandpa?"

Joshua, thus appealed to, pondered once more. His answer came at last: "Well, Myrtle, as you are so much interested in your new-found relative, I think you had better write him, and tell him I asked you to in my name."

“Oh, thank you, grandpa,” and two plump arms encircled the old gentleman’s neck, and a warm kiss fell on his cheek.

In her boudoir Myrtle penned the following:

“MR. CHARLES MELTON,

“*Dear Sir:*

“Your letter received. My grandpa, Mr. Joshua Melton, your uncle, requests me to answer it in his name, which I am pleased to do, and to say that your request is granted, and your room will be ready by Monday next. Your meals will be served in your own room, for our hours are much different from those acceptable to you. Other matters can be arranged after your arrival. My father, Richard Melton, is your cousin, and I am his only daughter. You are the only cousin I have and I shall be greatly pleased to have you come.”

She could not decide how to close her letter. “Yours respectfully” was too formal, for was he not a relative? Either “Yours truly” and “Yours sincerely” would do, but her pen faltered. “I know I shall like him,” she exclaimed aloud, and under the influence of the feeling she wrote:

“Your loving cousin,

MYRTLE.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NO CARPET KNIGHT.

AFTER Tom's departure with the keys, the dropping of which had prevented one episode and brought on another, Huldah regarded Mr. Carpenter scornfully.

"You fooled Tom, because he's so good-hearted and forgiving. But you didn't fool me. You said in your apology that you was sorry you didn't kiss me, instead of being sorry for trying to. Now, I want you to get out of this kitchen, for Mrs. Kersey, the cook, will be down soon, and I don't want to have to apologize for your being here. This kitchen is for the family and the help. Visitors go to the front door, ring the bell, and send up their names. We'll consider I've never seen you before, and I wish to the Lord I never had."

Mr. Carpenter considered the incident closed, did not reply, and took his departure, but not soon enough to escape Huldah's farewell: "Good riddance to bad rubbish."

An hour later Myrtle entered the drawing room and Mr. Carpenter arose to meet her.

"Good morning, Myrtle. I hope you and the family are well."

He took Myrtle's hand in his, kissed it, and then led her to a chair, seating himself beside her.

"I am very well, but father is slightly indisposed and is not going to the mill this morning. How long have you been here?"

"I got in very early; two hours ago. Came in the back way, and met your maid."

"Why didn't you send word by Huldah that you were here. I was up at six."

"Oh, she was too busy with her friend. I scented a love affair and nothing could have induced me to separate the loving couple."

"How gallant you are. Huldah is a little lady, and Tom Potter is one of nature's gentlemen. He is terribly sensible and matter-of-fact. He is called 'the level-headed weaver.' A very expressive if not elegant term."

"I didn't notice either of them particularly. I was looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you."

Myrtle ignored the lover-like remark. "You must get acquainted with Tom Potter. He is what they call a labor reformer, but he has facts and arguments to support what he says. I have listened to him until I have imbibed many of his ideas, and they, I mean the operatives, call me 'the arbitrator.' I always try to smooth over matters when any question comes up about hours or wages."

"Your duties as arbitrator must be arduous. Your father is not prone to take suggestions from his help, I've heard."

"No. I often tell him he's too harsh and unyielding. But several times I have teased him into making concessions."

Mr. Carpenter drew his chair closer to Myrtle's. "Now let us stop talking about laborers and reform, and such disagreeably unnecessary things, and dwell upon that which so intimately concerns *our* happiness — our approaching marriage."

Myrtle involuntarily drew away from such close proximity to her lover.

"But you know *that* was not to be talked about for six months."

"Six months from New Year's Day, Myrtle, and five months are already gone."

"So it is, the first of June. How swiftly time flies."

"Why, Myrtle, time has dragged very slowly with me. Each month has seemed a year."

Myrtle arose: "Yes, I know. I cannot help it, but every time I think of leaving my father the tears will come." She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and walked away from her lover, who followed her and put his arm about her waist.

"Surely, Myrtle, you do not look forward with sorrow to becoming my wife."

"No, not that — but father, I fear, may not live long. He has heart disease." The last words were spoken in a whisper. The situation was tense, but it was relieved by the sudden entrance of Huldah who announced "Captain Dudley."

Myrtle ran forward to greet the young man who wore the uniform of a captain of militia. Mr. Carpenter's unspoken thought was: "What a cussed place for interruptions."

"I'm on my way to camp, Miss Melton, and knowing that your father was not feeling well when he left the mill yesterday, I thought I would call and inquire as to his health. I trust he has improved."

"But little, I'm sorry to say. Excuse my thoughtlessness. Mr. Carpenter, make you acquainted with Captain Dudley, superintendent of one of father's mills."

Captain Dudley advanced with hand extended: "Happy to meet you, sir." Mr. Carpenter bowed and said: "How do you do?"

Myrtle was perceptibly vexed, but smiled on them both. Then a way of escape came to her: "I will go and see if father is able to come down."

Left thus together, Captain Dudley opened the conversation: "Do you belong to the militia, Mr. Carpenter?"

"I do not."

"Did you ever join?"

"I never did."

"It is a necessary arm of the Government."

"It may be, but I never had the time, money, or inclination to play soldier."

"Neither have I, in one sense, the financial. When I am in camp I lose my pay as superintendent, and receive much less as captain."

"Why do you remain in it, if you lose by it?"

"Some one must serve, why not I?"

"That's the way *I* settle it; some one must serve, why not somebody else?"

The colloquy was brought to a close by the entrance of Myrtle and her father. Richard shook hands heartily with Mr. Carpenter, then turned, with a clouded brow, to Captain Dudley. "Why in this rig, Mr. Dudley? I had supposed you were on duty at the mill when I should be out for a slight illness."

Captain Dudley replied: "You know, Mr. Melton, my attendance at muster for the next five days is absolutely necessary. You will remember I gave you notice a week ago."

Richard seated himself heavily in an easy chair: "Yes, but I was well then. To-day, my business absolutely requires your attendance at the mill."

The Captain rejoined: "But I am the only one away

at my mill; in fact, only two persons in your employ belong to the militia."

Richard's temper was rising: "Two too many. Cannot the police and the sheriff's *posse* preserve order?"

"It is hard to answer your question, Mr. Melton. Perhaps the day may come when the citizen soldier will save the lives of your family and protect your property."

Richard spoke angrily: "A useless, and it seems to me an impertinent remark, Mr. Dudley."

Mr. Carpenter interposed: "Perhaps Captain Dudley is aware of some impending danger."

Captain Dudley turned to him: "Excuse me, sir, but that remark was entirely uncalled for, and intended to be insulting."

Richard arose, and put out his arms characteristically: "Enough, sir, of this talk. Mr. Carpenter echoes my own sentiments. As my future son-in-law, I am happy to find that our ideas on this point coincide. You can go, of course, but without my permission; but if you do go, you will never be employed by me again."

Myrtle had remained silent during what had been a very unpleasant conversation, but at her father's unreasonable decision she could keep still no longer: "Father! You do not mean that, surely. Think how faithfully Mr. Dudley has served you."

Mr. Carpenter interpolated, sneeringly: "And how he deserts your father when he is ill."

Captain Dudley faced his employer: "Do you mean, Mr. Melton, that the penalty for my serving the State as I have sworn to do, is my discharge from your service."

Richard was unyielding: "That's just what I mean."

Myrtle appealed to the one whose fate was in the balance: "Think twice, Mr. Dudley, before you decide. Remember your mother and sister and the little home you are buying for them. The times are hard, and one's future, when out of employment, very uncertain."

"I know it, Miss. I have thought it all over, but my first duty is to my country, for I have sworn to obey its orders; my second duty is to myself and mine. Mr. Melton, I accept my discharge, for coupled with it is no taint of dishonor or dishonesty. I am a martyr to duty, and I am content. Good morning, Miss Melton — and gentlemen."

When he had gone Richard sank into his chair again, exclaiming: "That fellow is a bigger fool than I ever took him for."

Myrtle spoke up warmly: "Mr. Dudley is no fool, father."

Mr. Carpenter never lost an opportunity to support his prospective father-in-law: "I agree with your father, Myrtle. Any man who will give up a good position so that he can play soldier for a few days is decidedly foolish."

Myrtle had inherited some of her father's persistency. "Captain Dudley is no carpet knight, Mr. Carpenter. He enlisted in the Spanish-American War, was twice shot, once while carrying his wounded colonel from the field. He was promoted for bravery in action. He served through the war, was honorably discharged, and was elected captain in the militia by his companions who knew his courage as a soldier and his worth as a man. If that is *playing* soldier, then your remark was just — not otherwise."

Carpenter essayed to reply, but Richard commanded silence by a wave of his hand.

"I am astonished, Myrtle, at your vehemence in defending one who has so little regard for your father's interests. He may be a good soldier, but he is a very poor business man, as John says. There, girl, go take a walk in the garden while John and I talk business, and if you meet grandfather and mother tell them John has come."

Myrtle stood irresolute, with her hand on the door-knob. "I will if I meet them, but I shall walk somewhere else than in the garden. I think I shall go and see Mrs. Dudley." With this indication of open defiance she left the room not deigning to look back.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT DIVIDE.

MYRTLE'S remark that she was going to see Mrs. Dudley was heard by her father and his guest. The former thought that some explanation was needed to account for Myrtle's action: "Myrtle is quite intimate with Dudley's mother and sister—very nice people, too. This young man you saw is very high strung. He'll think better of it. These working men are all talk, but they never vote or fight as they talk. If they did, it would be time to be worried. But let's to business."

Carpenter did not require a second invitation: "Can you give us five hundred thousand yards of Melton AA for a quarter of a cent less than last order?"

"Well, John, I expected you'd squeeze me this time, and as my margin is none too large I gave notice a week ago of another cut-down of ten per-cent, so you see I'm ready for you. The weavers will squirm, pass some wordy resolutions, threaten to strike, and then go back to work as they always have done."

"We'll divide the margin, as usual, of course."

"Certainly. That was a neat dodge of yours, John. I show the bills to the overseers and convince them that I am selling you at very low figures, so as to keep running."

John laughed: "Then we divide the extra profit."

Richard joined in the merriment: "Exactly, half-and-half."

John produced a document which he spread out on

the table before him. "Our words are as good as our bonds, but the bonds are better than our words. I've signed,"— and he pointed to a line beneath his own name. Richard took a fountain pen from his pocket and affixed his signature.

While thus they were engaged, Huldah opened the door and pushed a little girl, apparently about twelve years of age, into the room. Her cheeks were bloodless, and she had the pinched look that comes from lack of proper sustenance. She stood, timidly, waiting to be noticed. Richard looked up, and seeing her, demanded sternly: "What do you want? Who are you?"

"I'm Elsie Brown, sir. I want some money."

"Money? I don't pay off in my parlor. If any money is due you go to the mill and get it."

John laughed sardonically: "Your workmen will be putting a keeper in your house if you don't pay — when they want it."

Richard was nettled by this remark. He might have softened a little but for its sarcasm: "Come, clear out. Don't bother me. I'm busy. Go to the office and they'll pay you."

Elsie had the bravery born of necessity: "The man says he won't pay me until next pay day. I ain't working now. Father is sick. I have to stay at home."

Richard was inflexible: "We can't break our rules. If we should, we might as well not have any. You will have to wait until pay day."

Elsie began to cry: "But father will die. He must have a doctor and some medicine."

She had gone too far — the lion in Richard was aroused: "Go to the overseer of the poor then, and get both. I

pay my taxes to support the poor, but I won't break my rules. Run right home, and don't you come here again."

Elsie stood irresolute. Richard arose, took her by the shoulder, put her outside the door and closed it with a slam.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling! "There is the breakfast bell." Richard went to a window. "Father and mother are just coming back from their morning walk. Where can Myrtle be? No matter. She probably missed them in the garden. She'll be here, soon. Come John — " and they went out arm in arm.

There was silence in the great room for some time, but it was broken by the abrupt entrance of Myrtle: "What shall I do? I could not find him. His mother and Nellie never will forgive me if I allow him to do this foolish act. No, it was not foolish — it was noble — but the result of it will be terrible. Shall I send him a letter? Father would be angry. How shamefully John spoke of Frank, and father, too. What can I do? Let me think." Her final thought was: "I'll let things take their own way — for the present. They'll get over their angry feelings in a week — and then I'll beg father to take him back!" And with this half-comforting resolve joined the family at breakfast.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT FROM THE COMMITTEE.

WHILE a manufacturer and a dealer were conspiring in the parlor to rob labor of a part of its earnings and divide it among themselves, events of a more humane and pleasing nature were taking place in the kitchen.

Mrs. Kersey was with the housekeeper, Mrs. Manson, planning for luncheon and dinner, as there was to be a city guest. Huldah was eating her breakfast, when Tom entered accompanied by Elsie. Huldah jumped up. "Where did you find Elsie, Tom? Why, darling, what's the matter?" and she wiped some tears from Elsie's cheek.

"Matter enough!" cried Tom. "That hard-hearted old skinflint — I mean Richard Melton, Esquire — owes Elsie's father two dollars for work done before he was taken sick. They told her at the mill that she must wait until next pay day, and so she came up here and he told her to go to the poor house — poor little thing, she'll fetch up there I'm afraid — if her father dies."

"Not if I can help it, Tom Potter. Don't cry, Elsie" — and warm-hearted Huldah kissed a big tear away.

"No, don't cry, you little chicken, you," said sympathetic Tom. "I ain't rich, but, confound it, I can spare you two dollars if Richard Melton, Esquire, won't."

He took out the money and gave it to Elsie, who began to smile. Tom laughed: "I'm paid, Elsie. You don't owe me a cent. You can have it, and welcome. That

smile was worth two dollars of any man's money. "Only give Uncle Tom a receipt for it"—and he kissed her.

Huldah was delighted. "Tom, you are a real good boy. I'm proud of you."

"I guess you'd better give me a receipt, too, Huldah. 'Twill make it more binding."

He tried to embrace Huldah but she pushed him away. "Behave yourself before children. Now, Elsie, go right home and give the money to papa. I'll come down this afternoon and bring something nice for him to eat. Good-bye, Elsie."

"Good-bye, ma'am. Sir! Sir!! Sir!!!" Tom turned. "Good-bye, sir."

"She's a sweet little girl — don't you think so, Tom?"

"There are others sweeter. And now I'll take that receipt"—and he did, despite Huldah's efforts to prevent it.

Tom went and looked down the garden path, and Huldah, with natural curiosity, did the same. "Who are those two hard-looking fellows out there?"

"Them's part of the committee."

"A healthy looking committee they are. What do they want?"

"We want to see Mr. Melton about this new cut-down. We can't stand it, and what's more, we won't."

"Suppose you have to? Are you going to be an ignoramus and strike? Mind my advice, Tom, and keep out of strikes. They never do the workingman any good."

"They do, if we win."

"Not in the long run. But you just join a strike and see how soon I'll look 'round for another fellow."

Tom grinned: "Perhaps the other feller will get into a strike, too. He will, if I know him."

"What do you want me to do, Tom?"

"Just go and tell Mr. Melton that *we* are here and wish to see him on business."

"Well, I'll go, but little good will it do you," and she flounced out of the room.

Tom went to the outside door and beckoned to Gulson and Deming, his colleagues, who had been waiting for the word to enter. "Come in, fellers. I've sent word to the boss that we're here and want to see him on business."

Deming had carefully inspected the house and grounds: "If we had our rights part of this big house and some of the pretty things in it would belong to us. I'd like to auction them off and divide the proceeds among our poor boys."

"So would I," assented Gulson. "Then I'd only work eight hours a day, and enjoy myself the rest of the time."

Tom had not forgotten Huldah's words of caution. "Sposin' you did divide, how long would you hold on to your share. What do *you* want of pianos, and pictures, and statues, and such like?"

Deming said sharply: "Our children want them and ought to have them."

"Yes, my daughter teases me every night to hire a piano for her" added Gulson.

Tom, for the moment, felt antagonistic: "Better get her a jewsharp. There are plenty of those to go 'round."

Deming resented this remark, and looked suspiciously at Tom. "Say, Tom Potter, you seem to be getting weak-kneed all at once. But mind you, Gulson and me

is a majority and you must do as the majority rules. Do you hear that?"

Mr. Gulson supported the last speaker: "That's good trade union, and good American doctrine — the majority rules."

Tom answered: "I'm with the strongest side; let's make it three to nobody. That's trade union doctrine accordin' to Tom Potter."

Huldah returned and said that Mr. Melton would meet the committee in his library. and she volunteered to lead the way through long corridors and by elegantly furnished rooms until it was reached. The committee found the room occupied by Richard Melton, his father, and Mr. Carpenter.

"What do you wish of me?" was Richard's immediate salutation.

Tom, as spokesman, said: "Sir, we wanted to speak to you *alone* on business matters."

Richard replied: "We are alone. My father you all know. His knowledge of labor matters is based on facts drawn from official figures and not on imagination. Mr. Carpenter is my selling agent, and has just given me a large order."

"Then you won't have to cut us down," said Tom.

"On the contrary. I must reduce wages or give up the contract."

Tom braced himself for the ordeal at hand: "I'm sorry, sir, for that. This cut-down is the last feather on the camel's back. The camel can't stand it. His stomach is getting weak, and bread and water don't agree with it. It isn't healthy diet for ten hours work a day in the mill and more helping the wives at home. I've been

with you five years Mr. Melton, and I haven't got a red cent laid up. I don't want to praise myself, but I gave the last two dollars I had to little Elsie Brown so she could get a doctor and medicine for her sick father."

Mr. Carpenter looked at Mr. Richard Melton, but his eyes were closed — probably his ears and conscience were open.

Tom continued: "I want to get married, but my girl wants to see my bank book before she weaves her lot with mine. I'm a single man, and perhaps you'll say I ought to stay so. But I don't want to. It's agin human nature, and contrary to the Bible which says increase and multiply. But the Bible means increase your income as your responsibilities multiply. That's family arithmetic accordin' to Tom Potter. I'll close by saying, as I did afore, the camel is hungry and wants more feed instead of less."

Tom wiped the perspiration from his forehead, as he sat down. Mr. Joshua Melton cleared his throat with a loud "A-h-em!"

"Mr. Potter, you don't stick to facts. Your wages, to-day, even with the reduction, are the best in the State, for the kind of goods. Statistics prove it. The cost of living, for what you actually need, is way down, and you can all save money if you'll use less rum, beer, and tobacco, and go to the theatre less."

Mr. Gulson arose quickly: "Sir, I think as how *you* ain't sticking to facts. I don't drink or smoke. I chew a little to keep the lump out of my throat which always comes when I think of my wife and family, and how poorly they're off. As to going to theatres, I haven't been in one or to a circus for twenty years. You have your fine

rooms, and music, and books, and can make happy home evenings. What have I? I work from seven till six, get through supper at seven, do chores to help my tired wife until nine, and up at five in the morning. Evenings when my chores are done, my children are in bed, and how can I spend money for amusements when they need clothes and shoes, or even spend my time in them, when I think of the hard day's work coming on again? Why, gentlemen, I haven't had a chance to kiss my little baby boy except on Sundays and holidays for more than a year. And holidays, they mean two days' expenses from one day's pay. If you must cut our pay down, cut down our hours, too, so we can have time to work in our gardens and raise a little crop."

Richard Melton was, or appeared to be, somewhat influenced by Mr. Gulson's plea. "John, how can I cut down these men's wages, if what they say is true?"

"'Tis true as Gospel," said Tom, and Gulson and Deming nodded their approval of the statement.

Perhaps it was all pre-arranged. There is fore-ordination in both business and politics. John answered: "You can do as you please, of course. I buy for the lowest price. Business is business even among friends. If you can't supply me at my figure, some one else can and will."

"You see, men," said Richard, "I have no choice. I must cut down, or close the mills."

"Better shut 'em up, then!" said a sullen voice.

Richard arose and cried, angrily: "Who said shut them up? So, that was you, Deming. Why are you here? I discharged you ten days ago. You have no business to say a word here. I'll hear no more from you. I'll run my mills my own way, and pay what I choose."

Deming was angry, too; "I ain't discharged, either. You didn't give me proper notice, and you haven't paid me what you owe me, anyway. I've a right to be here. I am a member of the Weavers' Union, and pay my dues, and you'll pay me my dues yet, or suffer."

"If I were well, I'd throw you out doors, you thief and incendiary."

"You're a liar, Mr. Melton. I never tried to set your mills on fire."

John placed his hand on Richard's shoulder: "Come away, Mr. Melton, you are ill, and this excitement may—"

"Yes, Richard, you'd better go," said his father. I'll give them some statistics which will be more convincing than cross words."

Tom laughed, despite the gravity of the situation. "You can't give us any statistics that will satisfy the cravings of an empty stomach."

Richard, supported by John, had reached the door, when he turned and said: "Go or stay, as you please; I'll say no more to you."

Deming answered him fiercely: "But we've got more to say to you. If you make this cut, your mills *shall* stop. Every man, woman, and child is with us. We'll strike and fight it out."

Richard lost control of himself: "Strike, and be damned to you. Every mother's son of you would be in the poor-house but for me."

"Yes," cried Deming, "you told Brown's little girl to go there; you'd rather support us in the poor house than have us do it ourselves by honest labor."

Richard was now in a violent passion. He broke away from John and came back into the room: "I don't care

what you do. You'll never starve as long as you can steal."

His father and John tried to restrain him. "Let me alone. I'll have my talk out now with these vagabonds. You may strike, but my mills *shall* run, and my help shall be protected with all the power of the law, and your blood be on your own heads."

Deming was enraged. "He refuses us both bread and justice. We will have both, and, if need be, we'll spill blood to get them as our forefathers did."

Attracted and frightened by loud voices in angry altercation, Mrs. Melton, Myrtle and Huldah entered as Richard cried: "Put them out — put them out, I say. I — m —" His voice and strength failed him and he fell back helpless in a chair, his mother and daughter bending over him.

"You needn't put us out," cried Deming. "We'll go ourselves. Come boys — to the mills. Let's strike while the blood's hot. Come on, boys — to the mills!"

Myrtle stood in Deming's path. "What are you going to strike for?"

"For our rights, and the next time we come a-visiting here, we'll get 'em."

Huldah grasped Tom's arm. "Are you going to strike after what I told you?"

"I'm in for it, Huldah. When I'm struck, I strike back. That's Scriptor accordin' to Tom Potter."

CHAPTER XI.

A TALK WITH COUSIN CHARLIE.

CALMER counsels prevailed. President Bentwich refused to call a special meeting of the Weavers' Union so the strike could be declared at once. He argued, effectually, so far as Messrs. Potter and Gulson were concerned, that it was unfair to close the mills until the carders, spoolers, spinners, and other branches were heard from. "One for all, and all for one" did not, necessarily, mean "all for ourselves." Deming objected vehemently to Bentwich's decision which was that the matter must lay over until the next regular meeting, nearly a week later.

During this interim many events of a more or less important nature were taking place in the Melton Mansion. Richard took to his bed and a renowned specialist was sent for from the city, who prescribed rest, a trained nurse, and took a big fee. Mr. Carpenter decided to remain in Meltonville until the labor dispute was adjusted in some way or other, and his prospects as the future husband of Myrtle more definitely understood.

In many respects the most important event was the arrival of Cousin Charlie. With him came two large boxes of books and pamphlets, and a big bundle of miscellaneous papers. He expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with his rooms, their furniture, and appurtenances, and within three hours after his arrival was busily at work upon what he called his "last" book.

"Do you mean your very last one?" asked Myrtle.

—
“Oh, no. My “last” book is the one I am working on. My ‘last’ is like a shoemaker’s — it can be used again.”

Mrs. Kersey complained about “two sets of meals,” but several of Myrtle’s dresses which could be made over for Mrs. Kersey’s niece, and some feminine adornments for herself stilled the cook’s complaints. Mrs. Manson, the housekeeper, never complained about anything, and so quiet reigned.

“May I come in?”

Cousin Charlie looked up and saw Myrtle’s bright eyes and smiling face at the half-open door.

“Certainly — glad you’ve come.”

“It won’t disturb you?”

“Not a bit. I had just finished a page, and exchange a tired, spattering pen for a new one which will have undesirable peculiarities of its own. One pen and one shave ought to last a man for life.”

“What are you writing, Cousin Charlie?”

“A book which has a *substratum* of fiction, introduces a great many facts, and, don’t think me egotistical, an account of the principal events in my quite long and muchly varied life.”

“Oh, a biography.”

“No, an auto — not mobile, but biography — written by the one who knows more about himself than he has ever told anybody.”

“How I should like to read it,” cried Myrtle.

“You shall, when it is printed, and you can help me immensely if you have the time to spare.”

“I don’t know what to do with myself. I can’t play the piano because nurse says it will disturb father. I

won't read because books nowadays are full of sin and sorrow, and end with separation or death."

"Such books leave a bad taste in the mouth," suggested Cousin Charlie.

"Yes," said Myrtle, "and make you suspicious of those who call themselves your friends. There must be such unhappy and wicked people in the world or those who write books would never think of them."

"No book has ever portrayed the worst in the world" was the reply. "If it were written, the good people themselves would call it libelous, for it would reflect upon their religious, social, and humanitarian activity. To the pure all things are pure, and those who shut their eyes and stop up their ears live in a fool's Paradise."

"How can I help you, Cousin Charlie? Mrs. Manson runs the house and there is literally nothing for poor me to do. They won't let me make my own bed, but some days I lock the door, pull the bed all to pieces and make it up again," and she laughed merrily.

"What a horrible condition of society," said he "when a rich young lady wants work and can't find anything to do. Well, I'll tell you what you can do for me. I have written down many incidents in my life. No doubt many that I have recorded appeal more strongly to me than they would to the general reader. You must imagine yourself a general reader, or rather a literary critic, and tell me what to keep and what to discard."

"What if I am too critical? — you may feel offended."

"My experiences during the past two months have given me a rhinoceros hide. My real fear is that you will be too lenient. But do not spare me, if you would help me. Shall I begin?"

For answer Myrtle seated herself in a softly-padded chair, mounted both elbows upon one of its arms, imbedded her chin in both upturned hands, and fixed her bright blue eyes upon the speaker.

He glanced at her, and thought: "I am going to read my Book of Life to an earthly angel."

He took up several sheets of closely-written notes, and said: "I was born ten minutes past twelve, on the morning of November 11, 1844, nearly sixty-three years ago. I'm particular about this, because an astrologer was puzzled once, it was so near the 10th."

"Do you believe in astrology, Cousin Charlie? Isn't it just like fortune-telling?"

"In some respects, only more so. I can't help believing that he figured it out in some way unknown to me, for he got the day, month, and year just right, and I had never seen him before, and he did not ask my name. Would you leave that in?"

"Oh, yes. I think it was wonderful."

"You mean what the astrologer said, and not my earthly advent. I couldn't help it, but he *might* have made a mistake."

"I was a healthy baby and by the next August weighed thirty pounds. The scales were reliable. My mother went on a vacation and I accompanied her, being included in the invitation from an uncle and aunt of my mother's who lived in an old-fashioned country town, not a suburban district such as we have now. Then occurred the most important event of my life."

"Why, you weren't a year old."

"Only nine months. We slept in a high bed, common in those days, the top of the feather-bed being fully three

feet from the floor. My mother undoubtedly had her arm around me when she went to sleep, but the nights in August are warm, and she must have relaxed her hold, for I rolled out of bed."

"Did it hurt you?"

"Not as I remember. But time proved that it was more than a 'hurt'—it was a life-long injury."

"Why, how?" cried Myrtle, changing her position, her gaze more intense than ever.

"Why, when I began to creep they noticed that I bore all my weight on my left knee. Then the doctor was called in: verdict, dislocation of the right hip joint. Then began a course of baking, boiling, blistering, etc., that lasted several years. I was accused of having rickets, St. Vitus dance, and other acrobatic diseases, but I proved an alibi."

"That was terrible."

"It might have been worse. When I was seventeen the Civil War broke out. I might be lying now in the Chickahominy Swamp, or reposing in the soldier's cemetery at Arlington, but for mine infirmity."

"Couldn't you walk?"

"I stayed at home until I was seven, leaning my hand on my knee, and using chairs and other articles of furniture for support, my mother acting as my teacher. I could read the newspaper at seven. With going to school began my life as a cripple, and I walked with a crutch for fourteen years."

"But you don't now."

"When I was about twenty-one I heard of a doctor in New York City who treated such cases as mine successfully. I went to see him; he said he would help me to

discard the crutch, but that I would be obliged to wear a leg-frame, or brace, all my life, and he told the truth."

"Did you have an operation?"

"You couldn't call it that. I was pulled or pressed into shape. For ten weeks I suffered intense pain for at least eighteen hours each day. Morphine, liquors, tobacco, were all powerless. It was just 'grin and bear it.' And since I have worn the brace if I don't get it on just right, I'm in pain every step I take. Some old writer said 'Pain is but pleasure intensified.' I told my doctor, and he said he would like to tie the writer up for just one day."

"You must be used to physical pain."

"I am,— but I have had my share. You know I am a statistician. Well, I made a computation and found that the time it takes to put on and take off my brace each day represented one thousand, four hundred ninety-six days of ten hours each, or very nearly five years. Quite a handicap in life's race. Would you print all this?"

"Certainly, I would, Cousin Charlie. You have overcome the effects of a great physical disability and are entitled to full credit for it. I hope the Creator will grant you a long life to make up for the time you have lost."

She looked at her watch. "'Tis your dinner time. May I come again and will you tell me some more about yourself."

"Come any time, but I can't promise you a steady position unless you are more critical. One of my publishers says that an author's friends are his worst enemies, for they think so much of him that everything he writes seems good."

"And your enemies?" asked Myrtle.

“If you are fortunate enough to have them, they are your best literary advisers; they humble your pride, puncture your conceit, point out your slightest errors, and indicate to you the golden mean that lies between praise, honest it may be, and abuse which you know is envious or malicious. Ah, here’s my dinner. Now the physical will predominate, and the mental take a sub-liminal position. Come often, Cousin Myrtle.”

CHAPTER XII.

COUSIN CHARLIE AS SCHOOLBOY AND CLERK.

COUSIN CHARLIE's pen had been flying across the wide sheets of paper for two hours. The mental engine was not tired but the physical fingers called for a rest and he threw down his pen and went to a window.

Moonlight! "The moon's pale light shone o'er hill and dale" came into his mind. "I must have learned that, or something like it, years ago," he mused. He looked out and a vision was before him. Clad in white, standing upon a grassy bank which intensified the purity of her costume, and bathed in the moon-beams which cast a silvery sheen over and about her, Myrtle seemed ethereal rather than real.

"Please don't unfold your wings and fly away," said Cousin Charlie.

Myrtle knew his voice: "Oh, no danger. I'm not angelic. Only a poor lonesome human. I'll agree to remain on earth if you'll come out and sit with me under that big crab-apple tree—" and she pointed to it.

"What have you been writing?" she asked when they were seated.

"Reminiscences of my schoolboy and early business life. I've swept the chambers of memory quite clean."

"Did you have any fun in school? I hated boarding school. Father wanted me to go to college—and I may yet—but I can't leave him now. I'm young, and have plenty of time."

"When we left off this noon I was just getting ready

to go to school. I had to use a crutch and my mother was afraid I would get injured crossing a crowded business street, so she engaged an Irish boy to go to school with me and see me home. His living parent, a mother, was very poor. The boy worked early in the morning, but got home in time to eat his breakfast and go with me. And that 'home.' One room, dark and dingy, an open fireplace for cooking, and for his breakfast, day in and day out, three slices of toasted bread and three cups of tea. Poor fellow, when a young man he was run over by a railway train and killed."

"The world gave him little," said Myrtle, sympathetically.

"Think of the millions who get even less than he did," Cousin Charlie replied. "It seems so far off —"

"What?" queried Myrtle.

"So unattainable under present influences, so necessary for the good of humanity — Oh! I have not said what — I mean the brotherhood of man. But I digress. I was whipped once in school. I had a cold, and closed my book. My teacher saw that I was unprepared and she called on me to read. I couldn't find the place readily, and received one blow with a flat ruler."

"That was mean of her," cried Myrtle.

"Nemesis followed her. She married a policeman. He went crazy, jumped out the window and killed himself. She lived and died a widow. My vengeance was appeased."

"How long were you at school?"

"About eleven years — primary — intermediate — grammar — high. Took a medal in both grammar and high. Had the best time in the high school. One of the teachers was sick and I kept school for him three weeks.

Two of the boys refused to study, so I sent them up stairs to the head-master with a note saying they knew too much for my room and that they belonged in the first class. He took them in, and did for them."

"Why, how?"

"He was giving a demonstration of electricity, so he gave them the handles and a strong touch of electrical colic. They were laughed out of the room, and I had no more trouble with them."

"It must have been funny."

"It was. I'm sorry I missed seeing it. But as some thirty versions of the seance were given me, I've a tolerable idea of how things went.

"The head-master was very bright."

"He was great — a born teacher. Ours was an honor school — no rules or regulations — each boy was expected to be a gentleman, and keep his fellows in the traces. In teaching it was the same. 'Boys, if you know you are right, stick to it, even though the President at Harvard College says you are wrong.' That's why I'm writing my book. I *know* I'm right, and I am going to stick to it despite all opposition."

"Who's opposing you, Cousin Charlie?"

"The great and powerful — but I'll tell you about that later. We're going to school now. The head-master and I never clashed but once."

"He didn't whip you?"

"Oh no. It was a mental conflict. He left the room one day and the boys began throwing wet sponges, full of chalk dust wiped from the black-boards, at each other. He opened the door suddenly, and a big one filled his face with water and soiled his shirt bosom. He was

warm. He asked each boy beginning at the foot of the class if he knew 'who frew dat sponge.' Nobody knew. They would have made good court witnesses. Then he came to me. I said 'Yes, sir.' 'Who was it?' he demanded. I refused to tell. 'What are your reasons?' he thundered. The situation was critical. I replied: 'The city doesn't pay me for taking charge of the room when you are absent.' The matter dropped then and there."

"What did you do after leaving school?"

"I became a bookkeeper. I had studied the science in the high school, and after being graduated bought another set of entries and worked them out at home. I had no difficulty in keeping the books of a house doing a business of three millions a year."

"It must be very dull work. I pity Mr. Andrews at the mill. He looks so pale and thin."

The books may be dull, but the surroundings are not. There were many interesting episodes in my clerical life."

"Are they going in your book?"

"If you approve them. My first employers were both deacons — dead long ago, and gone to their reward. The senior, a high-toned gentleman with a large soul; the junior's soul was much smaller. He had failed in business and paid ten or twelve cents on the dollar. A widow in black, with a little girl, came to him for help. Her late husband had been a one-tenth or one-eighth creditor. Junior refused to help her, saying she had no *legal* claim on him. She urged her necessity and the moral claim, but he put up the legal set-off and won. A good lesson for a young man just learning honest business principles — but we sometimes learn most by contrast."

"He ought to have helped her."

"Certainly, but you see he couldn't do it, *legally*! I kept the cash, but everybody put in and took out of the cash drawer. One day cash was fifty dollars short. Says Junior: 'Charles, that looks bad!' 'What looks bad?' I asked. 'Your cash being short.' The remark contained an imputation. 'Mr. Junior,' said I, 'don't worry about my taking fifty dollars from you. If I ever wish to steal, I'll leave some day when I have forty or fifty thousand to deposit, and my address will be some foreign clime.' It took me three weeks to locate that fifty dollars. I kept Senior's private cash, and one day I told him I was going to pay a certain bill which amounted to just fifty dollars. 'Why, I paid that the other day,' he exclaimed. Where did you get the money?' I asked. 'Out of the drawer.' Then I gave both Senior and Junior a short moral lecture on the injustice of imputing dishonesty to clerks, when discrepancies were more often due to the negligence of employers."

"You had them cornered that time."

"Yes, but once they nearly cornered me. The son of one of our best customers, or rather, we were one of his best, came in one day, threw down some invoices and a check and said, rather pompously: 'Receipt those quick, I'm in a hurry.' I was, too, for I was receipting a bunch of bills for an expressman, and they are always in a hurry. I kept at my work. Finally, Son said: 'Did you hear what I said?' I replied that I heard, but that I would attend to him as soon as I had finished with the other *gentleman*, and I put full strength on the last word."

"He was impudent, wasn't he?"

"He had reason on his side — his father was wealthy, and I was only a poor (financially) clerk. But listen to

the aftermath. A few days later Senior called me into the P. O. He began by referring to our extensive business relations with 'Son's' father. The son told the father that I had insulted him and the father suggested to Senior that I should apologize to Son. I said I had no objection if I were allowed to chose time and place. Junior came in, learned the clarified situation, and both were delighted with the satisfactory outcome. 'I will have Son come in' said Senior. Now, Cousin Myrtle, I'm not going to shock you by saying what I actually did say. I will idealize it. I told them when the limited quantity of water in the domain set apart in the next world for those who had transgressed in this was so congealed as to form a good surface for skaters I would willingly apologize."

"Why, Cousin Charlie! What did they say?"

"I'm waiting for the time when we shall meet."

"I have always thought that business life had little excitement in it."

"Aren't you getting cold? Don't you want to go in? Do you want to hear any more?"

"I could stay here all night."

"So could I, if I had your company. Well, I'll tell you another of my bad actions: Senior had a son, Jimmie, about ten years old. At the end of my desk was an iron fence with a gate. Jimmie liked to play horse on that gate. I objected because it shook the desk, spilled my ink, and was prejudicial to abstruse financial calculations. My polite remonstrance was answered by a repetition of the offence. My sharp — Stop that Jimmie,— was followed by a bang that rattled the windows. I took the young man gently by the collar and an available part of

his habiliments, and landed him on the outside of the fence. His youthful pride was touched and he yelled 'Father!' Senior came. I explained the situation, and added that if Jimmie rode on my fence again I'd open the window and throw him into the dock which was just beneath. By the way, I forgot to say that just before Jimmie 'banged' for the last time he informed me that his father owned the place, and he would do as he pleased. You see that the superiority of money to labor is implanted, and perhaps inculcated, early in the minds of the children of many capitalists. And, yet, in the end, muscle is more powerful than money."

"Please go on."

"What, more? You are insatiable. And would you advise me to print these anecdotes of an unbridled clerk?"

"Every one of them. They are true, and so different from those that authors make up."

"I'm encouraged, and justified by your encomiums. We had a shipping clerk named — I'll call him Simon. He was what they call a 'hustler.' He was sent by Junior to collect a bill with instructions to stay until he got the money. The debtor was a wealthy man, but slow in paying his bills. Simon presented the bill. 'Can't pay it to-day. Come in again! Simon sat down. Debtor asked: 'Didn't you hear what I said? Don't wait 'round here. I'm busy.' Simon remained seated and mute. Mr. Debtor became angry: 'If you don't get out, I'll put you out.' Simon replied: 'I was told to wait until you paid the bill. My pay is going on just the same.' Mr. Debtor fidgeted and fumed, but finally drew a check and paid the bill. Then Simon arose in his might, which consisted of a full vocabulary of the latest slang: 'I came

in here polite, and asked you to pay a bill. You've used me rough, and now, you old galoot, if you'll come out on the sidewalk, I'll knock the stuffing out of you!"

"Why, what language!"

"Yes, forcible, but not elegant; inappropriate, but effective. Mr. Debtor met Senior next day and asked him if he had a boy working for him — and he described Simon. 'Yes,' said Senior. Mr. Debtor replied: 'He's a very smart boy and he'll yet along in the world.' And he has."

"Did you ever lose any money?"

"For my employee, never a cent. Came near it, though. Went to a bank one day to pay a note of ten thousand dollars. The teller said it was twenty dollars short. I pulled back the money and counted it again. It was all right. I kept my eye on that teller the second time he counted it. He gave me the note without a word. Three weeks afterward he skipped to Cuba with fifty thousand dollars belonging to the bank and compromised by returning half of it. And this man so qualified for big game would have stolen twenty dollars from a poor clerk."

"Wasn't he mean?"

"Yes, but meanness paid him, temporarily, better than honest toil. One episode was funny. I went to pay ten thousand dollars on account one day to a big house. I arrived at 1.40 P. M., but was told that my receipt would have to be dated the next day, as the firm deposited at 1.30 P. M. That meant a loss on interest to our firm of one dollar and sixty-seven cents. I determined to get even with the interest automaton. I saved up all the small bills that came in until I had ten thousand dollars

—nearly a basket full. One afternoon, about 5.45, I arrived and deposited my load. It was 6.30 P. M. (they closed usually at 6) before that money was counted, *and my receipt was dated that day!*"

"They didn't love you for that."

"Why, no. It is not human nature to love anybody who gets the better of you, particularly, if the victory is won by unfair means — in professing friendship and loyalty, when the speaker knows that you are to be stabbed in the back."

"Can anybody be as mean as that?"

"My dear, you are young. You will hear and read much of such ingratitude, such treachery, as you grow older. My clerical reminiscences are nearly concluded. I went to another house and got more pay, and a cash drawer with one key, and that was in my possession. My employees were Jews in religion, but they always gave me a Christmas present. With the third house, which was the last, I remained but six months, as I accepted the position in which I remained thirty-four years — the reasons, or alleged reasons for my dismissal, will be considered in my book. But the moon has gone behind a cloud, so as not to hear any more of my confessions, and from angels of light we are changed into imps of darkness. We must go in. *Il fait temps que nous nous couchons.* Just think of it. I studied French forty-six years ago. Did you ever hear that little French poem called Life?"

"No, can you repeat it?"

*"On entre, on crie,
Et c'est la vie;*

*On crie, on sort,
Et c'est la mort.*

"We come into this world, and cry—and it is Life;
they cry, and we go out of it—and it is Death!"

CHAPTER XIII.

SEVERAL BUSINESS VENTURES.

MR. JOHN CARPENTER found life in Meltonville very dull, indeed. Mr. Melton was averse to talking business, though improving daily. Myrtle spent considerable time with her father who loved her as much as he could anything next to his gold. She passed much of her time with Cousin Charlie and to this John objected, even mentioning his opposition to Myrtle herself. She laughingly accused him of being jealous of a married man with a wife and two children, and John was discomfited in the passage of words.

"Where is his wife?" he asked.

"In the country, visiting her father and mother, or Cousin Charlie would not be away from her."

John determined to find out for himself what attractions that ell room possessed, and one afternoon honored Cousin Charlie with a call.

"Do I intrude?" asked John.

"Strictly speaking, I suppose we are both intruders, but as guests of Mr. Melton it is our duty to be agreeable to each other."

It devolved upon John to open the conversation, for, begging to be excused for a moment, Cousin Charlie put the final words to a sentence and then threw down his pen.

"Thoughts are evanescent," he remarked, "and must be put down or they will fly away, and sometimes can never be recalled."

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“Have you always been an author?”

“In embryo, yes. In actual performance my first production saw the light about seven years ago. Since then I have dictated several books.”

“You are now writing by hand.”

“Yes, I could hardly presume on my cousin’s courtesy so far as to ask accommodations for my stenographer. But she will put my pen-pushing into typewritten copy before it goes to my publisher.”

“Your work has been what might be called professional.”

“Yes, statistics is a profession, especially the practical part of it. You are a good judge of cotton cloth, I presume, but the chances are that you couldn’t weave a yard of it.”

“I have never worked in a cotton mill.”

“I thought not; and do not know how the goods you sell are made. So, with theoretical statisticians whose knowledge begins with the printed table. They are unacquainted with the details of forming the inquiries, designing the schedules or printed circulars of inquiry, the writing of explanations and instructions for the use of persons called upon to supply information, or for the guidance of special agents, the application of printed or mechanical devices for the purpose of tabulation, the proper arrangement of tabular matter to fit inelastic printed pages, and, above all, the writing of analyses to explain the meaning of the figures, thus preventing misconceptions or wrong applications of results arrived at. That’s a pretty long sentence, but I think I got it all in.”

“I never thought there was so much to be done.”

“No, there are many intelligent men, as regards other

subjects, who think statistics ripen themselves, and all there is to be done is to pluck them when ripe."

"They are considered dull."

"Only by those who cannot experience the pleasures of the science. To the enthusiastic statistician, the evolution of a new table which contains, it may be, the opening up of a valuable industrial or sociological question, causes as much delight to the inventor, for a practical statistician is an inventor, as does the sight of her new-born babe give to a loving mother. This is not bathos. Statisticians must be enthusiastic optimists in order to do original work. They cannot be Jeremiahs, and lament the impossibility of finding out what they desire to know."

"Is there any school in which the science is taught?"

"Not the practical part; but there will be in time. Some twenty years ago I wrote a book on practical statistics, but the applied science has made gigantic strides since then."

"Pardon what may seem rude inquisitiveness, but what special preparation had you for your work?"

"I was a double-entry bookkeeper, and a born inventor. Practical statistics require continual invention. Cost must be reduced by the application of existing machines, or the invention of those specially adapted to the work; then the highest class work must be done by comparatively inexperienced clerks, and the machines must help them to develop their mental powers, instead of rendering them mere slaves to a machine."

"Were you ever in business — I mean trade or manufactures?"

"In both. Just after leaving school I bought a small printing press, and that was the foundation of my present

knowledge of the printing business. My manufacturing venture was the making of men's and women's linen collars and cuffs. There were many processes, and a failure in one spoiled the others; there was perfection needed for cutting, stitching, turning, binding, washing, starching, drying, ironing, rolling, and boxing. I have not mentioned the drawing of patterns and the selection of materials. Besides I made lace collars, men's shirt bosoms, and ran a custom laundry."

"And was the business a success?"

"Industrially, yes; financially, no; and for two good reasons: The first was the action of the linen collar manufacturers in selling goods at the cost of manufacture to drive us out of the market. We could have stood this much longer but my partner appropriated the company's funds for his personal use, and I gave up, for I could not continue in business with a dishonest man."

"Did your next venture end in a similar manner?"

"No, my last was killed by politics. My mother was an old lady, and time hung heavily on her hands. I opened a small store for the sale of sheet music and put her in charge. I introduced the idea of having a player and singer to show music to customers. The idea has spread over the country. I had written the words of songs, so I had them set to music and published them. I was the first publisher to put a half-tone picture on a piece of sheet music. There are very few pieces now but that have such illustrations. My business soon grew from retail to wholesale, and I had three hundred and sixty customers in all parts of the country. Then came a presidential election, and a tariff revision. Customers bought, but paid nothing. I sold out, but the company I started is still in existence and doing a large business."

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“I thank you, Mr. Melton, for your kindness in telling me so much about yourself. My career has no such variety. I am my father’s partner. He supplies both brains and money, I, some ability in making a trade — in buying, chiefly. Your experience proves, what my father has always maintained, that no mercantile or manufacturing business can be permanently successful without adequate capital for expansion.”

When John next met Myrtle he said: “I passed an hour with your Cousin Charlie. He is a good talker.”

“Yes,” replied Myrtle, “he talks well, and he has done things.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COMMITTEE REPORTS.

THE minutes of the previous meeting had been read without any interruptions from Mr. Beach, who was conspicuously absent. Mr. Gulson, as Chairman of the Committee had read his report and was followed by Mr. Deming who had made a speech that caused a commotion among the members. After one of his statements, several voices called out: "Did he say that?"

"Yes," cried Deming. "We were told that we would never starve for we would undoubtedly steal. I call upon Brothers Gulson and Potter to bear me witness. What did he say, Gulson?"

"He said we were no better than paupers."

Tom added: "Yes, and he said we would be but for him. But what he said about stealing stuck in my crop the worst. We may become honest paupers, but dishonest citizens, never!"

"I don't know about that," broke in Deming. "Starvation knows no law. A working man without money, hungry, with wife and children crying for bread that he is denied the opportunity to earn by honest toil, is not a citizen. He is a wolf, and has a natural right to steal, or kill, if need be, to get the means to support life. He said that we might strike and be damned! Shall we swallow that answer and meekly submit to the cut-down, or shall we, like men, accept the challenge he throws at us?"

Cries of "No!" "Never!" "Strike!" came from all parts, and the presiding officer was obliged to cry: "Order, gentlemen, order!"

Mr. Deming proceeded: "Before moving some resolutions which I have prepared I would like to hear the views of my brother weavers as to the necessity of striking at once."

As he resumed his seat, a dozen or more members jumped to their feet and cried: "Mr. President," Mr. Bentwich calmly surveyed the excited gathering, and recognized a French Canadian who had always taken a conservative position, and who, the President thought, might pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Mr. Gagnon."

"Mr. President, the Bible says a soft answer turneth away wrath. Hasn't our committee, by indulging in wrath brought *hard* answers upon themselves and us? We all know that Brother Deming is impulsive, and Brother Gulson nearly as much so. Brother Potter is level-headed, but was in the minority. Has all been done that can be done before we declare war? We are in the field with high spirits, few arms, and little ammunition. Our industrial enemy is strongly entrenched, and his army chest is full. Mr. Melton's daughter has sided with us in past disputes, and we have won much through her intercessions. I don't believe we can strike to win. I believe in arbitration, co-operation, industrial partnership — anything that pacifies, alleviates, and brings about a better return for our labor."

Mr. Deming arose to reply: "Brother Gagnon always has some plaster to apply to the wound, which covers up the sore for a time, but does not heal it. Can you talk

arbitration with a man who calls you a thief? Can you co-operate with one who says you are a pauper? Can you go into partnership with a capitalist who wants *all*? But, brothers, we are the ones to blame. They have only got what we have allowed them to take. But we gave, in our ignorance and weakness; we can take back in our knowledge and might."

There was loud applause, and then more cries of "Mr. President."

"Mr. Hudson."

"I don't think striking will do us much good. I work in the mill, and so does my wife. Our children — four of them — are too young to go in the mill — I thank God for that! But they are not old enough to get along without missing a mother's daily care — and they do miss it. If my wife could only be at home with them, we could work in peace, without the constant fear that something may happen to them. Our earnings, put together, only enable us to live. Our children lose a mother's care, our home shows the want of it, and our poverty becomes almost unbearable, when there are no hopes in the future."

"Oh, there's hope for you, Brother Hudson," said Deming with sarcasm. "You have four children. In a few years you can put them in the mill, and let the task master grind their young lives out of them. That's the only way we working men can become capitalists; by raising large families, and living on their earnings when we grow old or get used up."

President Bentwich arose: "There's a world of truth in what Brother Deming says, and what is the remedy? What or who can solve the labor problem? What will render rich men less avaricious and tyrannical, and enable

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poor men to earn more and be more independent? You all know my theory; you have all heard me say that fewer hours of labor will naturally bring us to a most just industrial equilibrium. Statistics prove that irregular employment is our great drawback. If labor could be evenly distributed over the year, neither men nor women in this State need work more than eight hours a day, to earn as much as they do now. We get what suffices for the life of the body; we get nothing to satisfy the life of the mind. We exist. We do not live. Nor shall we, until each honest toiler is able to earn as much as with economy and prudence will comfortably maintain himself and family, enable him to educate his children, and also to lay by enough for his decent support when his laboring powers have failed. This is what the wage system must be made to do!"

Deming arose, excitedly, and exclaimed: "And what does it do, *now*? It enables a comparatively few workingmen to comfortably maintain themselves and families by their individual labor; it makes the great majority, and their wives and children, bow and groan under the cursed yoke of poverty. It is a weak and criminal system. It uses men and women when they are strong, and leaves them to shift for themselves when they are sick, infirm, or out of work. It sets the law at defiance by employing tender children who should be at school or at play. It robs children of a mother's care and builds jails and poor-houses to hold those who grow up in sin or idleness. To the unfortunate, the greater part of whom are injured while at work, it holds no prospect of better days. Oh, men! if you could all feel as I do, we could start a revolution in this little village, which would awake the world of labor. We are losing time."

He took a paper from his pocket: "Mr. President, I will read the resolutions which I have prepared."

Tom's time had come, and he cried:

"Mr. President."

"Mr. Potter."

"I ain't much given to talkin' in public, but I'm going to put in my oar a little before them Resolutions is read. I hardly know where to begin, for most everything in creation has been lugged in so far, but I'll pitch right in when a point comes up handy. In the first place, a lot of you are down on the wage system. You are ready to pull the house down over your heads. Have you got a brand new plan all ready to put in its place?"

This inquiry provoked a chorus of replies: "Eight hours a day," "Co-operation," "Industrial Partnership," "Profit Sharing," "Socialism," "Down with Capital," and many others.

Tom smiled: "I'm glad each one of you, has agreed on some plan. There's nothing like unanimity in action. If each one of you pulls his own way, and don't help the other fellers, we shall go ahead mighty fast, I can tell you."

The President interposed: "Eight hours a day will be a grand victory for labor."

Tom approved the sentiment: "So it will. So it will! I hope you may get it. But, when you do, just remember your poor wives who work sixteen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four at that worst of all drudgery — housekeeping! Don't you go to the library or walking with the children, and think it all right for your wives to stay at home and finish up that washin', and ironin', and mendin.'"

Deming did not rise, but said: "Socialism will remove all our troubles. It's a sure cure."

Tom was quick to reply: "But it will kill the patient. Divide as often as you choose, and the lively ones will always get a breakfast while the others are starving on words. I don't take much stock in either communism or socialism. They mean a loaf for every loafer, with full privileges of loafing."

"But can't Labor and Capital be brought to work hand in hand?"

"Labor *is* capital," said Deming.

"You're wrong there," replied Tom. "Men with capital don't actually labor. They *trade*. Trade makes capital, and finds it. You can dig diamonds until your trouser's pockets stick out, but you ain't rich unless you can sell 'em."

Mr. Hudson interjected irrelevantly: "But wives and children have to work. You are not married, and have only yourself to look out for."

"When I do get married, Mrs. Potter shall never work away from her own hearth — unless, of course, she insists on it." There was a general laugh at Tom's expense. "My idea is to have her stay at home and devise plans to keep down expenses. I know you'll say no, but your wives' labor costs you more than it brings."

Mr. Israel Beach had entered quietly and had been listening to the forensic displays for quarter of an hour. His oratorical powers were aroused and he addressed the President:

"Lemme talk."

Some of the members endeavored to make him sit down, but he persisted:

"More pay — more of the good old-fashioned dollars our daddies used to have. More pay and less work is what I'm in for."

Then a colloquy ensued between him and Tom Potter:

"Mr. Beach, you make me think of the dog that was crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth."

"Any meat on it, Mr. Potter?"

"Yes, *one dollar* a day. He saw another bone in the water with *another dollar* on it. That made *two* dollars."

"Did he go for it?"

"Yes, he dropped his *one dollar* bone and jumped in for the other."

"Did he strike out?"

"Yes, and finally managed to get ashore having lost his own dollar bone, and the other one he tried to get. Put yourself in the dog's place, and you'll see the point."

Deming was annoyed by the delay: "Such talk is only fit for dogs. Telling stories won't remedy our wrongs."

Tom was determined to have the last word: "There ain't no remedy — no cure-all. Everything helps, but we've got to wait for the onward march of human nature which never failed us yet. Where's the country to be found where so much money's spent to educate the poor man's children as here? Them educated children are going to have a better time than their fathers, and they will bless the institutions of our dear old country when they grow up. Time tries all, and cures all. I ain't agin your plans, but we can't use 'em all at once. Take in one at a time. That's labor reform accordin' to Tom Potter."

Tom's peroration was followed by cries of "Deming," "Question," "Resolutions," and Deming, in response thereto, mounted the platform.

"The Resolutions, men are short, sweet, and to the point. It won't take me long to read them, or Richard Melton to listen to them."

Deming unfolded a sheet of paper and read: "*Whereas*, the proprietor of the Melton Mills has reduced our wages to the starvation point, and has posted a notice that he intends to reduce them still further, and, *Whereas*, the one object of business is to let the laborer live by toil as well as to support the capitalist in idleness, and, *Whereas*, it is financial wisdom to give up a business that fails to do this, *Resolved*, that we will work only for what we deem a living wage, and, *Resolved*, that the Melton Mills are hereby closed until we have our rights."

The reading was followed by loud cries of "Good!" "That's the style," "That's business," "Question."

President Bentwich rose to put the question when he was addressed by Mr. Gagnon.

"Mr. Gagnon has the floor."

"Mr. President, I think these Resolutions are inflammatory and ill-advised. We have never had a strike at the mills, and I think one can be avoided. I move that the Resolutions be laid upon the table until our next weekly meeting and that a committee be appointed by the President to visit Miss Melton and ask her to present our case for her father's consideration. If that mission fails I will vote for the Resolutions."

"Second the motion," came from several voices.

The question was put. "It is a vote," said the President. "Doubted," cried Deming and some of his followers. Tellers were appointed and they declared a tie.

"I shall vote in favor of Mr. Gagnon's motion," said the President, "and I appoint him a committee of one to wait upon Miss Melton and state our grievances."

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. HOPE WARRINER.

"COUSIN CHARLIE, may I bring a visitor to see you this afternoon?"

"Masculine or feminine?"

"Oh, she's a lady — President of our Village Reading Club. She has read one of your books."

"Which one?"

"She couldn't remember the name exactly — she said it was about a young man from the city who went to a country town and turned things topsy-turvy, and I imagine she thinks you've come here to do it again."

"You must quiet her fears, Myrtle, for I have no such intention. I shall give her a hearty welcome for your sake."

After dinner Myrtle and the expected guest found Cousin Charlie hard at work — "pushing the pen" as he called it.

"Cousin Charlie — I mean Mr. Melton, make you acquainted with Mrs. Warriner."

"I am pleased to meet Mrs. Warriner. Cousin Myrtle tells me that you have read one of my books."

"One?" exclaimed Mrs. Warriner, "I have read them all."

"Madam, I am delighted to see you. I have a cynical friend who says no one could read them all — and live. Which one pleased you most?"

"They are so different, each having a distinctive style,

that comparisons are hard to make, and would be invidious — and, I think, unfair. But how you must have studied country life and country people. You must have spent your life with them.”

“You must believe me, madam, when I tell you that I never spent more than three months in the country in my life, the longest period being three weeks.”

“Incredible!” exclaimed Mrs. Warriner. “How could you learn so much about them in so short a time?”

“Easily explained. If I had been born in a country town, or had lived in one long, their peculiarities would have seemed natural instead of peculiar, and I should never have thought to write about them. Being a city man, these peculiarities caught my attention — they were new and novel — and I enjoyed writing about them.”

“What made you think of writing books?” asked Myrtle.

“Because I couldn’t do anything else to pass my evenings away.”

“That was an individual peculiarity, was it not?” asked Mrs. Warriner, laughingly.

“No, purely physical. I had cataracts in both eyes, and could neither read nor write at night. My wife read a country book to me, and I decided to try my hand at it. I engaged a stenographer, and all the books I have written — I have not written at all, but have dictated them — and in the evening after my regular day’s work was done. The work I am engaged upon is the only one I have ever written with a pen, or rather a number of them.”

“How many pages can you write in a day?” was Mrs. Warriner’s next query.

"My good friend, Hezekiah Butterworth, who has passed on after a life of good works, said that no author could do good constructive work for more than three hours a day. My experience for the past seven years proves the truth of his remark — but my three hours a day have been in the evening."

"You haven't answered Mrs. Warriner's question," said Myrtle.

"I'm coming to it. I can write with a pen one thousand words an hour; on a pinch, a couple of hundred more. I have 'penned' eighteen hundred words in an hour and a half. This is slow compared with dictation, when I average two thousand words an hour, or six thousand in an evening. On two occasions I dictated twelve thousand five hundred words in three and a half hours, being three thousand five hundred seventy an hour, or very nearly sixty words a minute. It was harder on the stenographer than on me, for I sat in my chair and talked it while she was obliged to make more than twelve thousand five hundred dots, and curves, and twists to record my ideas. Then came for her the still more difficult task of reading her notes."

"But stenographers write much faster than sixty words a minute," suggested Mrs. Warriner.

"I know, they do but you must remember that it was I who fixed this limit, not my stenographer."

"And you are going to keep writing, Cousin Charlie?" asked Myrtle.

"As long as I live," he replied. "I have lost my vocation, and must now depend upon my avocation. But the work is congenial, the field wider than the world, and if you have something to say listeners can always be found."

"Don't you think the commercializing of literature is great evil?" asked Mrs. Warriner.

"Assuredly, I see no reason why an author should not grow rich from his work as do clergymen, and doctors, and lawyers."

"You don't mean that," cried Myrtle. "You are joking. You can't believe all he says, Mrs. Warriner."

"I beg you will not. Authors have to be inventive, and the greater part of their inventions has no foundation in fact."

"Clergymen advertise themselves from their pulpits every Sunday," said Mrs. Warriner. "When a doctor performs a wonderful operation he is praised in the newspapers, even as are lawyers who rescue criminals from the clutches of the law."

"My dear madam," said Cousin Charlie, "when the great reading public looks at the question as you have presented it, it will not bewail commercialization in literature. In these days there is no particular romance or pleasure in contemplating a starving author."

"But the advertising of books," said Mrs. Warriner, "that surely is carried beyond the limits of good taste."

"Do you mean puffing or advertising? There is an ethical zone into which only the select few can enter. They are the subjects of puffery. Outside of this zone are hundreds of authors who care little for the personal opinions of critics — and those authors are advertised by their publishers and, like a well-known infant's food 'by their loving friends.' If a book hits the popular fancy it requires neither puffing nor advertising to become a success. John reads it, and tells Jane it is worth reading. Jane reads it and tells Mary 'It's just lovely,' and so

grows the endless chain until the author sees his book one of the six 'best sellers.' "

"Why six?" asked Myrtle.

"Nobody knows. An arbitrary standard of excellence financially, which no one thinks it worth while to dispute, except the author who would rank number seven."

"But the *manner* of advertising," persisted Mrs. Warner, "like a circus or a new soap or perfume."

"Just as defensible in one case as in the other," was his reply. "A book, from the publisher's standpoint is as much an article of merchandise as a cake of soap or a bottle of perfumery. And you will notice that newspapers whose literary critics decry sensational book advertisements, always have a good word to say for themselves, not only in their own columns, but, also in those of their contemporaries. And now, a word about advertising. It is not like a joke, where the great pleasure comes from not seeing the point at once. The meaning of advertising must be seen at the first glance, or it will be like the seed that fell on stony ground. The old saying is 'He who runs may read,' but this is not the motto of modern advertising — which is 'He who runs **MUST** read.' And now, as you must be tired hearing me talk so much" — both ladies protested that such was not the fact — "I will tell you a true story. A friend of mine, a theatrical manager, produced a play in England, after its successful run in the United States. It was a blending of pathos and comedy — comedy of the hilarious kind. The reception given the play by British audiences astonished him. They laughed, but during the pathetic parts their evident amusement was greatest. My friend went to an English friend, and explaining the situation, asked his

opinion. 'Oh, that is all right,' said his friend. 'They laugh during the pathetic scenes, because they have just seen the jokes in the funny ones. It's a national peculiarity. Wait until you get to Scotland; they'll sit as glum as owls.' "

"Could I prevail upon you, Mr. Melton, to come to the next meeting of our Reading Club and give us a selection from one of your books."

"Sorry to refuse you, madam, but, like Dickens, I am not an elocutionist. I will come and say to your members what I have said to you this afternoon, if you think it will please them." And it was so arranged. When Cousin Charlie turned to his work, he found his inspiration had gone. He had talked his thousands of words instead of writing them.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE MELTONVILLE BANNER."

A CITY man in a country town is an object of general interest, and Charles Melton soon recognized the fact. In one of his books he had written about a young city chap who had set the tongues of the country gossips a-wagging. They had wondered "who he was, what he was, what he came for, and how long he intended to stay," and Cousin Charlie seemed to be in for a similar scope of investigation.

Mrs. Hope Warriner soon disseminated what information she had obtained, and a rumor to the effect that she had passed an afternoon with Mr. Melton, the author, soon reached the ears of Mr. Ralph Skidmore, the editor and proprietor of "The Meltonville Banner."

Mr. Skidmore measured five feet, four inches, and weighed two hundred fifty pounds. He was physically opposed to the exertion required to visit the Melton mansion and interview Mr. Charles Melton. But editors have unexpected ways of bagging their game. Mr. Richard Melton did not subscribe for the "Banner," but his daughter did, and what he proposed to write would surely be seen by some member of the household, and shown to the newcomer.

Within an hour after the inception of the idea, Mr. Skidmore was reading a proof of the following item:

AN AUTHOR IN TOWN, AND THE ALLEGED PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT.

Mr. Charles Melton, the well-known author is paying a professional as well as friendly visit to his relative, Hon. Richard Melton. It is said that Mr. Melton has been engaged to write a history of Meltonville

and its industries, particularly the cotton mills owned by his cousin. The work will be superbly illustrated, the frontispiece being a steel engraving of our esteemed townsman, Hon. Richard Melton.

Mr. Skidmore leaned back in a rickety arm-chair, which creaked its opposition, and smoked his pipe complacently. "If that's true I'm ahead of the game. If it isn't I shall hear from him, and I'll feature the denial next week."

The item was seen by Myrtle, who took the newspaper at once to Cousin Charlie. He read it, and laughed heartily. "A city newspaper trick. He's trying to smoke me out. Thinks I'll deny it, and then he'll write twice as much about as true as this is."

"But father will be angry. He has never had a photograph even, and I'm sure would not allow his portrait in a book. You must see Mr. Skidmore and tell him there's no truth in the story."

"Mr. Skidmore knew it was 'a story' when he wrote it. He can't put me *in loco parentis* — he must father his own lies."

"I'll leave the paper with you, Cousin Charlie, for I don't wish father or grandpa to see it."

"I'll put it in this desk drawer, Myrtle, and if Mr. Ananias calls I'll confront him with his malicious manufacture."

Mr. Skidmore waited, but there was no explosion in the quarter where he had expected it. The village stationer and fancy goods dealer took orders for the forthcoming book, but said he didn't know who was going to publish it. Mr. Skidmore was finally obliged to call at the Melton mansion and ask to see Mr. Charles Melton.

Cousin Charlie received the editor pleasantly, and the piles of written sheets upon the desk almost convinced Mr. Skidmore that his guess was correct. Emboldened by

apparent success, he opened the conversation: "You are getting along well with your book, Mr. Melton."

"Oh, yes. I learned the printer's trade when I was in school. One of my schoolmates owned a small printing press. We bought some type, and set up and printed with our own hands a monthly called 'The High School Gazette.' We got some advertising, and made the thing pay."

Mr. Skidmore wished to know about the book. "You have been working on this book some time, have you not?"

"I always liked writing. When I was in the grammar school I printed and wrote a paper by hand, and read it to my indulgent friends. I had advertisements, too, but as the edition consisted of one copy only my rates were not high."

"Very interesting," said Mr. Skidmore. "That early practice you find of help on your present work, no doubt."

"When I was quite young I began writing for the papers — real papers, I mean, like yours. I was correspondent for New York papers for years, and I made it a rule to never describe anything that I did not see, nor to tell anything that I did not believe to be true."

Mr. Skidmore coughed — a little irritation, presumably bronchial.

"I was not a success as a newspaper man, Mr. Skidmore. One editor told me I lacked invention. I wrote dramatic and musical criticisms, editorial paragraphs, slings and arrows, and funnygraphs. I was editor of a daily paper for a month; worked eighteen hours a day, and spent the other six thinking of what I should do the next day. Decided that such a life was too strenuous, and of

late years have confined my newspaper work to special articles, and, occasionally, an alleged poem. Here is one I wrote thirty years ago. I had it printed for gratuitous distribution."

Mr. Skidmore took the poem, for he had become convinced that he would get nothing else — for all of his inquiries remained unanswered.

When back in his office he read the poem carefully, and decided to publish it, stating that it was specially for the "Banner", by Mr. Charles Melton, author of "etc.," and "etc." Mr. Skidmore thought that its publication was particularly opportune owing to the anticipated strike at the mills. It was entitled:

THE CRY OF LABOR.

True Labor's cry is not for ease,
For honest toil no good men shirk.
Make flowers grow — you'll see the bees —
The cry of Labor is for work!

True Labor's cry is not for spoil,
It does not seek to win by theft,
For well it knows, in the turmoil,
Workingmen, too, would be bereft.

True Labor's cry is not for blood,
It does not mean to curse the land —
Which has received the Old World's flood —
Home of the free! Republic grand!

True Labor knows the nation's life
Was saved by blood and wealth. 'Twas done,
And to each man, and child and wife,
Belongs the praise for victory won.

Some gave their blood, their wealth some lent,
Life's sacrifice none can repay —
A grateful land their monument,
Their fame shall grow from day to day.

The money loaned! The promise made!
And toilers groan beneath the load;
By none the bond will be gainsaid —
True Labor knows the honest road.

Upon them falls Debt's cramping hand,
But still they toil — no duties shirk —
To the repudiating band
They answer only, "Give us work."

All honor, then, to working men,
Who fought for you and me, to save
Our native land; they'll fight again
To save it from a bankrupt's grave.

Then start the mills, and drive the nail,
Sink low the mines, bore deep for oil,
Load up our ships, spread ev'ry sail,
And answer Labor's cry for toil.

When plenty comes, the mist will rise,
The silver cloud's behind the murk;
'Tis confidence will clear our eyes,
And answer Labor's cry for work."

CHAPTER XVII.

INTERCESSIONS.

WHEN Pierre Gagnon stood in the presence of Myrtle Melton he did not feel so self-reliant, so brave as he did when he had proposed that a committee be sent to ask her to intercede with her father. If the truth must be told, he stood awkwardly and looked bashfully at her. He had a Frenchman's admiration for a beautiful woman, and Myrtle dressed in white with a tiny cluster of pale blue flowers in her light hair made a picture that charmed her visitor and almost deprived him of the power of speech.

"And you are —" began Myrtle.

"I am Pierre Gagnon — one of your father's weavers. You know there is notice of a cut-down and our Union will vote to strike."

"Oh, I hope not. Can nothing be done to prevent it?" and Myrtle turned appealingly to poor Pierre.

"There is only one way, Mademoiselle. I have been appointed a committee to see you and ask you to intercede for us. If you fail, the strike must come."

Myrtle was not sure she heard aright — but his words were plain. There was no mistake. Unless she could bend her father's iron will the mills would close, and misery, destitution, and probably crime would follow. She had won some small concessions in the past, but here was a task of such magnitude that her courage failed her for a moment, and she recoiled. Pierre sprang forward to support her and she allowed him to lead her to a chair. She

sat quietly, thinking, he gazing at her expectantly. "Your heart is with us, Mademoiselle. I can see that."

"It is, Mr. Gagnon. If my word could settle it there would be no cut-down — but, my father —"

"My brothers shall know that your heart is with us — If you said that the cut-down was necessary, we would try and stand it — but, as you say — your father. That is different."

Myrtle arose, the light of determination in her eye: "I will try, Mr. Gagnon, I will try. When must you know?"

"We meet again in a week."

"I will send for you — when I know. My father has been ill — I must wait for a good opportunity."

"I understand, Mademoiselle. Our cause is safe with you. If you fail, we shall not blame you."

When Myrtle was alone, the will power that had sustained her in the presence of another gave way — and she sank into a chair. How unhappy she was. She did not love the man her father had selected for her husband. Then her father was so unyielding. She would have gone to Cousin Charlie — but he had troubles of his own, which he bore with a cheerful heart and smiling face. No, she would not trouble him, but she would think of him and her thoughts would encourage her. She did not hope for success. She could only try, and trust that her defeat would not be too bitter. She went through a French window out upon the wide veranda. At one end it was closed in with glass, while curtains could be drawn down to shut out the sun rays or too strong currents of air. Her father and her would-be lover were at the farther end of the veranda, and both were smoking. If she spoke now, both would be against her. And why not? Filial regard

might lead her to respect her father's words, but John's opposition would spur her on. She approached them, but they were busily engaged in conversation and did not notice her. She listened. Perhaps they were talking about her. If so, she would choose some other time for her intercession. Their words came to her receptive ear. John spoke: "I hope they won't be such fools as to strike. I want those half-million yards of 'A extra.'"

"And you shall have them if I lose money on every yard." Her father's voice was raised to a high pitch. "I will lose thousands to have my own way, but not one dollar will I grant these strikers."

Myrtle's heart sank. So it was decided, before she could speak a word; but she went forward, bravely: "Pardon me, father, but your words seem to show obstinacy rather than wisdom."

Her father answered her, pleasantly: "Wisdom and dollars don't agree together, Myrtle. If business was in the hands of women they'd grind down the laborer worse than the men do."

John laughed sneeringly: "You're right, Mr. Melton. Women know the value of money. What would the rich men's wives and daughters say if their fathers or husbands told them they would have to go without new hats and dresses because the working men had struck for higher wages?"

Myrtle was indignant at the speaker's tone: "Every good woman would make the sacrifice — if it is worth so strong a name."

Richard was not disposed to argue with his daughter, so he asked her a question: "Myrtle, how would you deal with a body of strikers?"

Myrtle's face glowed, as she answered: "I would listen to them with respect; satisfy them with facts or good reasons; win their esteem by justice, and their regard by good treatment."

John remarked: "The millennium hasn't come yet, Myrtle. When it does, you can hold out the olive branch."

"I would hasten it by holding out the olive branch *now*."

"It wouldn't do any good. Some men are chronic grumblers. Their stock in trade is always the same. In the first place their hours are too long."

"And they are! Mr. Carpenter, do *you* ever work ten hours a day? Do you own a horse that works half that time in twenty-four hours?"

John did not answer Myrtle's question, but continued his statement of labor's grievances: "Then their wives and children have to work."

"So they do, more's the pity. Do you harness a colt into a carriage before he has his full strength?"

"Not until he is *broken*."

Myrtle glanced at her father; he was, apparently, sound asleep. She pulled the shawl about his shoulders, and then replied: "True! and no laboring man who loves his wife and children puts them into the mill until driven by necessity, or he is *broken* down."

John seemed to enjoy the controversy: "Then, again, they live in filthy houses and work in dangerous mills and shops."

"True again. I have no doubt your stable is better than any house occupied by a mill-hand in this village, and I am sure your horses are so guarded that no injury can come to *them*!"

To Myrtle's surprise her father took part in the conversation: "You'd better withdraw from the conflict, John. Myrtle is an enthusiast, and uses sharp weapons. She has used them on me often, but I have survived them."

"I thought you were asleep, father."

"Not exactly; only just dozing — just enough awake to get the drift of your arguments."

"I'm not afraid of thrusts, Mr. Melton," said John. "Then, Myrtle, they never save any money."

"Would *you* be content to work simply for a living, and a meagre one at that?"

"With the woman I loved, yes."

"You are avoiding the question, Mr. Carpenter. Please leave 'love' out of the discussion."

"Anything to oblige. Well, many of them are ignorant."

"So much the worse for you rich men. Illiterate help are the most expensive in the end."

"They form trade unions and start strikes which bring them misery."

"And you rich men form associations and combine to influence prices, and you always get your extra profit — and your losses out of the laborer. Father and you both do it, I know. A 'corner' is a rich man's strike, and it brings misery, when honest trade would insure comfort."

"They start co-operative societies which fail up for lack of capital, and industrial partnerships which go to pieces, because the brainy men see they are working for others, and forgetting number one."

"Yes, are not small firms crushed by large ones, and do not millionaires profit by the disasters of small dealers?"

"Finally, Miss Melton, they positively have nothing to eat, only *good* water and bread for breakfast, water and

good bread for dinner, and good bread and good water for supper."

"You are grown cynical, Mr. Carpenter, because the argument is against you. You have your oysters, and soups, and roast, and entrees, with sweets, and other delicacies, washed down, no doubt, with expensive wines."

"How few women know how to order a dinner. You are a paragon."

"I despise flattery."

John arose: "Miss Melton, I have made my sweetest meals from a bowl of bread and milk, with pure water as my only beverage. We yearn for what we have not. Cloyed with rich food at home, the simple meal set out at a country farm house is my ideal of gastronomic delight."

Myrtle, too, arose: "I am afraid our long debate must end here. It is getting chilly. Father, you must come in."

In her own room Myrtle realized that she had fought one battle, and lost. In another conflict she had been victorious. She knew, now, that she would never become the wife of John Carpenter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"FADS."

THERE is an old saying that "All roads lead to Rome." Cousin Charlie soon found that a modern paraphrase might read "All roads lead to my den," for all the members of the Melton family and their guests found their way thither. Among the last to come was the proprietor of the mansion. Cousin Charlie threw down his pen, and welcomed his cousin heartily, congratulating him on his recovery.

"I have been talking with John about your resignation of your position at the Capitol. Why did you give up your life work?"

"I didn't resign. They didn't give me a chance to do so. If they had, they could have secured the end they had in view without resorting to a cheap political trick. They were, probably, afraid that I would insist upon staying, but they might have asked me first."

"John says that some persons, politicians I suppose, told him you indulged in too many fads."

"I deny the truth of the imputation. The law under which I worked, and which I had sworn to carry out, directed me to present in my reports 'statistical details relating to all departments of labor, especially in its relations to the commercial, industrial, social, educational and sanitary condition of the laboring classes, and to the permanent prosperity of the productive industry of the state.' "

"A very broad law," remarked Richard.

—
“Yes, and one under which new and novel investigations, erroneously called ‘fads,’ were provided for. The office was created in order that the real condition of the working classes might be known, as a basis for intelligent, remedial legislation when needed. The office had the power of suggestion — the power to make those suggestions into laws resided in the legislature — and their execution was the sworn duty of the Chief Executive.”

“When I was in the Senate I voted to abolish the office,” said Richard.

“I knew it. I was Chief Clerk then, and followed the discussion carefully. You were outvoted six to one.”

“I think it was a mistake to continue. The more you tell workingmen about their condition the more fault they find.”

“It is an American citizen’s inborn right to find fault. It is the voice of the spirit of liberty within him. As McNeill, the great labor advocate once wrote, ‘Discontent with one’s environment is the surest sign of progress.’ As regards the so-called ‘fads,’ I will abide by the verdict of any jury of intelligent citizens as to whether every subject treated in my reports was not legitimately within the lines of the organic law.”

“I am not acquainted with the detailed objections.”

“If you have the time, I will enumerate some of my ‘fads,’ not in chronological order, but as they come to my mind. Bearing in mind the last clause of the law referring to the permanent prosperity of the productive industry of the State I sent circulars of inquiry to the Board of Selectmen of each town in the State, asking how much unoccupied land there was suitable for manufacturing or business purposes, and how far it was from the nearest

railroad; how much water power was not yet utilized; whether fruits, vegetables, fish, etc., for canning could be supplied; whether the town had clay, sand, peat, lumber or other natural products; the number of men, women, and young persons who would like employment; the railroad facilities for shipping; what kinds of business would be best suited to the town; if there was a good supply of water for household and manufacturing purposes; whether there were gas or electric light plants, and electric railways connecting with other towns and cities, and whether the town was, or could be made, a summer resort. Fully nine-tenths of the towns answered the inquiries and the results of the investigation were printed in my report, the legislature making an appropriation for an extra edition. *Was that a jad?* I am conscious of the fact that the Chief Executive is entitled to full credit for securing the appointment of an industrial commission, but my report antedated, and, undoubtedly, suggested action on his part. This is shown by the fact that I advocated the appointment of a State Engineer to examine our ponds and waterways to see how much more water power could be supplied, and the cost of making it available. The Chief Executive called attention to this suggestion in his message relating to the proposed industrial commission. *Was my suggestion a jad?*”

“I see no objection to what you have stated,” said Richard. “There must have been other points to which objection was made.”

“Oh, there were. What I have referred to was for the benefit of manufacturers principally, and working-men incidentally. I now come to suggestions made particularly for the benefit of the so-called working classes.

The idea most strenuously assailed by the newspapers was that relating to Old Age Pensions. Now, the fact is, I didn't advocate old age pensions as such. The most persistent advocate of an old age pension law is one whom we all love and admire — Our Grand Old Man — the Rev. Edward Everett Hale. I proceeded on different lines. I examined the reports of the State Charity Board and found that the State, and also the private charities, paid out less than half the money appropriated or collected for the actual relief of poor people. The greater part of the money went into repairs, new buildings, and investments. When I came to the almshouses, those blots on our State's fair soil, I found one town paying nearly one thousand four hundred dollars in a year to support one poor pauper. In ten towns, having one pauper each, the cost was nearly six hundred dollars a year, and so on. I am well aware that the cutting out of so many strongly entrenched superintendents and matrons will require a long-handled axe, and a powerful blow, but I would like to wield the implement. My contention was, and is, that the industrial soldier who had served faithfully under a 'captain of industry' should be boarded in a private family by the State; in this way the horror of the almshouse would be removed; we should no longer read, with tears in our eyes, Will Carleton's 'Over the Hill to the Poor-house'; and the citizens thus provided for would retain their self-respect till the grave claimed them. Those properly belonging in institutions should go there. *Was this a jad?*"

"And does the public understand you position?" asked Richard.

"The majority of them are like the Irish woman who,

in response to a remark addressed to her, replied, 'I hear, but I don't heed.' That is the trouble. These vital questions are not brought home to the individual as they would be by the *referendum*, and, yet, it would take him years to use that power judiciously. If our legislators were nominated by political parties, and chosen by lot, it would extract the viciousness of politics. Of course, such a statement is a fad, but I would rather win an office by 'square deal' luck than obtain it by using money for the purchase of votes."

"You ought to go to the legislature and air your views," said Richard with a peculiar smile.

"If I did, I should certainly present them. You have been kind enough to listen to me so far. Pardon me, if I pursue the matter further. If I show in my report that only five per cent of more than half a million employees in the productive industries of our State receive more than six hundred dollars a year for their labor, *is it a fad?* If I prove that in only fourteen out of ninety productive industries are the annual earnings for each employee in excess of six hundred dollars, or what is called 'a living wage,' *is it a fad?*

"If I investigate corporation returns, and find that instead of ten thousand stockholders in certain corporations there are less than half of that number of actual individuals, because the same person is intrusted in different corporations, does the pointing out of this concentration of financial power in the hands of the few *constitute a fad?*

"If I show that children under the age allowed by law are illegally employed in manufacturing and mercantile establishments, *is it a fad?* And am I to blame if, in

response to an inquiry as to whose duty it is to stop this infraction of the law, I say it is the duty of the specially authorized police and of the school committees?

"If I print legal decisions, showing that sometimes the trade unions win their cases, and that the decisions are not always on the side of Capital, *is it a jad?*

"If by printing the provisions of industrial agreements entered into by employers and employees, strikes are prevented, and a better feeling is created between the representatives of capital and labor, *is it a jad?*

"If I show the manufacturers and dealers of the State where they can find markets for their goods in foreign countries, am I rendering a service to the public or *is it a jad?*

"If about seventy-five per cent of the girl graduates of our public schools say that the industrial education given them in such schools has been of no practical value in the employments in which they are engaged, is the publication of that fact an item of great public interest, as indicating a marked deficiency in our system of instruction, or *is it a jad?*

"If I point out that we must have apprentices in all our trades, or that our industries will dwindle for want of skilled workmen, is it a pregnant industrial fact, or *is it a jad?*

"If I show that in England, in 1785, the questions of a graduated income tax, and an inheritance tax, were fully considered, and a basis formulated for the legal prevention of inordinate fortunes, is it a reliable historical fact for our guidance, or *is it a jad?*

"If I present the fact that more than a quarter of all the workingmen and women in the State are irregularly

employed during the year, does it show the need of free employment offices, or *is it a jad?*

"If official figures prove that forty-six one-hundredths of one per cent of the population of a great city pay sixty-eight per cent, or more than two-thirds of the total tax levy, is it a graphic picture of the modern distribution of wealth, or *is it a jad?*

"If I present figures to show that advances in wages and decreases in working time have so increased the cost of production as to render higher prices a necessity if business is to be continued with profit, am I helping to allay public unrest, or *is it a jad?*

"If a careful investigation supplies the information that in a large city, there were more than a thousand merchants and dealers who had on their books the names of over seventy thousand persons who owed them more than a million dollars that they were unable to collect, does this information come under the 'financial' provision of the organic law, or *is it a jad?*

"If in only one hundred days of a certain year the pawn-brokers in a large city advanced more than four hundred thousand dollars on pledges of clothing, household goods, jewelry, workingmen's tools, etc., does it show the deplorable financial condition of a large number of the inhabitants, or *is it a jad?*"

Mr. Richard Melton did not reply to this fusillade of questions; Cousin Charlie had not expected or intended that he should. He had before him a representative of the corporation, money-god class, and he determined that he should have full recital of the offences against corporate wealth of which he had been considered guilty while in office.

"There were charges of extravagance, were there not?" asked Richard.

"Of alleged extravagance without any consideration of attendant circumstances. I have not yet reached that subject in my book, but when I do, I shall be pleased to give you both sides of the question."

What Richard Melton thought of his afternoon's experience or his cousin's advanced ideas, he never divulged.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BURST OF MELODY.

"ANOTHER visitor to see you, Cousin Charlie," cried Myrtle.

"He or she?"

"It's Meredith Raynor, and she's the prettiest and brightest young lady in town."

"If you had said 'sweetest,' I should have disputed her title at once."

Myrtle blushed prettily. "Oh you're prejudiced. She's the organist at our church, and she plays the piano, and sings —"

"Like a nightingale," broke in Cousin Charlie. "I've met the species before. Is she a classicist?"

"I don't know just what you mean."

"Does she abhor popular music, tolerate grand opera, think comic opera trivial, and popular songs simply vulgar?"

"The last time she was here she sang 'Bring Dem Presents Back,' three times to please father."

"She'll do. I'm not afraid of her."

Myrtle's encomiums were certainly not undeserved. Miss Raynor was tall, robust, with dark hair and eyes, a marked contrast to petite, fair-haired, blue-eyed Myrtle.

"I hear you have written songs," said Miss Raynor, and her voice was a full, rich contralto.

"Words only. I understand, appreciate, and think music, but have no power of expression, either vocal or

instrumental. Nevertheless I make up a melody for every song I write."

"How interesting. Have you any of your songs with you?"

"Only a few. My opera scores with their librettos are so bulky I was ashamed to bring them with me, but had I known I was to meet you I should have presumed on my cousin's courtesy."

"Perhaps you can remember the words of some. They must have a melody of their own."

"To me, they have. But you must remember that they are not poems. The writing of them has been my relaxation. My life-long lameness has deprived me of outdoor exercise and sports, and my pleasures have been largely mental."

"You must have found them a Fountain of Youth," said Miss Raynor.

"Now you are contrasting my white hair and my youthful face. It runs in the family. My father at sixty-two, my age very nearly, had as fresh a complexion as a youth of ten. Speaking of poems set to music, their inaptibility was strongly shown when Longfellow's 'Masque of Pandora' was so treated by Alfred Cellier, the English composer. The words must sing themselves."

"Then," said Miss Raynor, "I shall prepare for a burst of melody."

"Don't be too sanguine. I'm in some respects like my old friend Blake, who wrote 'Waves of Ocean' and 'Clayton's Grand March.'"

"I play them both," cried Miss Raynor.

"I found an old piece of his," Cousin Charlie continued, rubbed out his name, and asked him to play it. He did

so, and asked me who wrote it. I gave an assumed name, and he complimented it highly, as it deserved. Then I told him that he wrote it himself. He never said an unkind word of a brother composer in his life. He was a born musician."

"But your songs, Cousin Charlie. Miss Raynor and I are both impatient."

"If I forget a line here and there I'll make up something to fill in. Here is a love song from a comic opera, the scene of which is laid in Spain, 'afore de war.'"

To my loved one I have written,
With her graces I am smitten;
To bend the knee, and kiss her hand,
I'd be the happiest in the land.

"The chorus has more rhythm."

This letter holds my heart,
'Tis writ with Cupid's dart,
'Tis full of passion true,
As pure as man e'er knew;
She'll find within its pages,
The story told for ages —
This letter holds my heart."

"Oh, I wish you had the music here. How I would like to hear a *tenor di grazia* sing it."

"Now, I'll take all the romance away. In the opera it is sung by a young woman who makes believe she is a young man. There are so many more young women who can do that, than there are *tenori di grazia*."

"Do you like to write love songs, Cousin Charlie?"

"Anything, Myrtle, that the piece needs. They are

talking about the King's ancestors, and the Prime Minister drops into history set to music.

Peter, the Cruel
Killed in a duel;
Henry the Gracious,
Sancho pugnacious.
Wise young Alfonso,
For he was born so,
All of them members of his family.

"With family pronounced *famillee* for euphonious reasons. The second stanza is sanguinary:

Young Petronilla,
He was a killer;
Garcia the trembler,
John the dissembler;
One drowned his brother,
One killed his mother.
All of them members of his *famillee*."

"Horrible!" cried both ladies. "How could you write anything so terrible?"

"As a needed contrast to the sweetness of the love songs — here is another, by a lady of high rank — a Donna. It's only the refrain. Can't remember the words of the song:

The gallant knights of old
Who wore the plumed casque,
Would not see fair maidens sold
Should wealth their parents ask.

—
They love of woman placed
Far 'bove the reach of gold —
The charms that lovely woman graced
Belonged unto the bold.

“Repeat last two lines. Notice the extra syllables in last line but one. Out of place in a poem, but gives the composer an opportunity for musical effect. Fortunately, I have this song with me, and judging from Miss Raynor's speaking voice, which is not, however, a reliable standard, it will suit her exactly.”

“I shall be delighted to sing it, Mr. Melton.”

“Do you write comic songs, Cousin Charlie?”

“Certainly, *oui*. All comic operas must have comedy. Here's a song from a satirical, modern American comic opera, supposed to be sung by a judge. You will notice that I accent heavily the last syllable in each line, as required by the music:

I.

When I was young, I studied *hard*,
I read the works of Avon's *bard*,
I sold old nails and saved my *cents*,—
And a good education was my recompense,
My learning got, I taught a *school*,
And happy faces were the *rule*,
Was careful not to give *offence*,—
And a re-appointment was my recompense.

II.

The desk I left and sought the *bar*,
And soon was known both near and *far*,
Each client got a light *sentence*.
And plenty of business was my recompense.

Then on the bench I took a *seat*,
 My legal lore was quite *complete*,
 I closed my eyes to the *defence*,
 And a re-election was my *recompense*.

III.

I'm posted up, none can say *nay*.
 In all that points in Bouvier,
 Littleton, Coke, and Blackstone, *too*,
 And many other volumes quite unknown to *you*.
 A di-vorce suit, a burglary,
 A petty case of larceny,
 I know the points, not one is *new*,
 Except to individuals such as *you*."

"Not very complimentary to you and me, Myrtle,"
 said Miss Raynor, laughingly.

"An author is not responsible for language used by
 his characters — if he were, all the courts would be hear-
 ing suits for libel. A character in a book is impersonal,
 although his physical and mental peculiarities may sug-
 gest some living personality. But no person should be
 so egotistical as to think that he is *sui generis*. I'm
 afraid to read the last stanza."

"Please go on."

IV.

"It is my aim to justice *mete*,
 All evil doers to *defeat*,
 This end I gain, my words are *trite*,
 By strenuously striving to be *upright*.
 I'm now prepared to hear this *case*,
 These burglars bold meet face to *face*,
 So Captain Blynd, please open *court*,
 And I'll be the umpire in this legal *sport*."

“How I wish I could hear the rest of it,” cried Myrtle.

“And the music,” added Miss Raynor. “Do you know — can you imagine it — cooped up in this little town I’ve never heard an opera or seen a play. My parents were very straight-laced and when I was at the Conservatory of Music I was under a solemn promise to keep away from theatres. I’m my own mistress now, and I’m going to the city soon.”

“On a musical and dramatic spree, as it were,” said Cousin Charlie. “I was a great theatre-goer. Before I began writing plays I studied stage craft under the well-known English actor John C. Cowper. My memories of old actors are very vivid.”

“How many operas have you heard?” asked Miss Raynor.

“Couldn’t number them. Let me see — Martha, *Trovatore*, *Traviata*, *Crown Diamonds*, *La Sonnambula*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Puritani*, *The Huguenots*, *L’Africaine*, *Aïda*, *Rigoletto*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and others whose names I cannot recall; *Der Freischutz*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Brunhilde*, *Die Walküre*, in fact the Wagner repertoire; all the French and English comic operas, and numberless burlesques and musical comedies, not forgetting vaudeville, oratorios, and concerts.”

“What a feast!” was Miss Raynor’s comment, and she added: “Think of poor me — music mad almost — and no opportunity to gratify my hunger.”

“I prefer plays,” said Myrtle. “I went with father to see ‘Ben Hur.’ It was great.”

“I couldn’t give the names of all the plays I have seen. I had a collection of more than three thousand programmes, but, by a sad mistake, they were sold for old paper. The

first play I saw,—I was a little boy,—was ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ I remember Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, in all his characters, Ristori, Fechter, Salvini, John McCullough, E. L. Davenport, J. W. Wallack, Lester Wallack, Mdme Janauschek, Adelaide Neilson, Lotta, Minnie Palmer, Lucille Western, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, George Rignold, Mr. and Mrs. Florence, Barney Williams, Dion Boucicault, William Warren, Jimmy Lewis, Mrs. Gilbert, McKee Rankin, Frank Chanfrau, Kittie Blanchard, Mrs. Thomas Barry, Charles Barron, Annie Clarke, Josephine Orton, Agnes Perry-Booth-Schoeffel—but I shall have to stop or I shall weary you—but I could continue the list indefinitely.”

“What was the greatest play you ever saw, Cousin Charlie?”

“I cannot answer that question, Myrtle. You know the proverb says, ‘Times change, and we change with them,’ and so it is with plays. ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’ was a power when I was a boy. Now it is only a reminiscence, with characters doubled because more than half the effect is lost. I thought *Little Em’ly* a beautiful play the first time I saw it—the second time, it seemed full of bathos, unreal, unconvincing. *East Lynne* brought a lump to my throat, and ‘*Oliver Twist*’ sent a shiver down my back. Of the great tragedies I prefer *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. Of the melodramas, *Monie Cristo* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Of the spectacles, *Sardanapalus*. But these plays, except *Hamlet*, are not seen now, and, probably, would not suit the present public taste as they did mine many years ago.”

“But you are not old, Cousin Charlie.”

“Not in heart, Myrtle, but the inexorable finger of

Father Time is keeping tally, and there is no way of successfully disputing his count. He is the great statistician whose official figures we must accept without question."

"I have had a delightful afternoon," said Miss Raynor. "So many interesting things to remember — to look forward to."

"But the climax has not been reached. Here is that song — *The Gallant Knights of Old* — with Myrtle's permission we will adjourn to the music room. When you have sung it, Miss Raynor, I feel I shall be your lifelong debtor."

"And may father hear it, too?"

"Why, certainly, Myrtle. Music is a universal language that speaks to all receptive hearts —" and he thought to himself as they were on their way to the music-room — "Perhaps it will reach his — but I fear he is no gallant knight of old, and that he would sell his daughter for gold."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GALLANT KNIGHTS OF OLD.

MISS RAYNOR seated herself at the Weber Grand, and ran her fingers lightly over the keys. Then she turned to Cousin Charlie: "Did you bring the song? Oh, there it is on the table. Are you ready?"

"One of your own selections first, Miss Raynor. Like yourself, I am greedy for music."

"What shall I sing? Have you a favorite?"

"Yes, Juanita — I love the melody of that song."

"So do I"—and she sang it with perception, intensity, and her full, melodious voice gave a new beauty to the almost weird strains.

"Do you sing *Listen to the Mocking Bird?*" asked Myrtle.

"Everybody does, or tries," said Cousin Charlie. "I have written a new chorus for it," and with a pencil he put down the new words on the back of the song which Miss Raynor was to sing. All joined in the new chorus:

Listen to the robin's note;
From his little redbreast throat,
Upon the air now bursts a silver strain.
Wait till spring has come once more,
Then above the cottage door,
The little birds will build their nests again.

"Now, Mr. Melton, I will not be put off any longer." He placed the music upon the rack, and stood ready to turn the leaves.

She glanced at the ornate title page, then opened the sheet:

"The Gallant Knights of Old. Words by Charles Melton. Music by Frederic A. Jewell."

I.

To-morrow morn I give my hand
To one I can ne'er love;
A grandee proud, none in the land
Can hold their heads above.
He's rich in land, he's rich in gold,
But still it is a shame
To link my youth with one so old,
Though with an honored name.

Cousin Charlie joined in the chorus.

"You didn't say you sang," cried Miss Raynor.

"I don't dare to. I can't get anybody to acknowledge that I can sing, but the melody of that song so strongly appeals to me that for the moment I think I can sing. Did I throw you out?"

"Not at all. You placed every note correctly."

II.

But family ties, they all tell me,
Must conquer thoughts of love;
My heart may break, but I must be
Just like a turtle dove.
I'll marry him, this aged man,
But in my heart I'll keep —
A corner pure, which Cupid can
Find entrance to, and sleep.

Cousin Charlie looked askance at Myrtle. There was a suspicious look in her eyes, as though tears had formed

there, and been hastily wiped away. "Confound that John Carpenter," he thought. "He's not worthy of such a treasure — and will never make her happy. Oh, these mercenary parents."

"Why didn't you join in the chorus, Mr. Melton?"

"I wished to hear your voice, Miss Raynor, without any embellishment. I'll join next time, sure."

III.

This grandee old will droop some day
Beneath increasing years;
But when he's gone, I'll find a way
To stop my falling tears.
A widow young, I then shall be,
Possessed of name and gold.
If suitors come, they can't wed me,
Unless they're knights of old.

"A far-sighted young woman," remarked Miss Raynor.

"Hard-hearted, too," added Myrtle.

"Don't prejudge her, ladies. She explains in the last stanza. I wrote it in afterwards to meet possible objections.

IV.

Nay, do not think I've heartless grown,
And mean my husband ill;
But when to gold a heart is thrown,
That heart must die, or kill.
The price is paid, my heart must die,
My life must be a blank.
With one I loved I'd gladly fly,
Forsake both gold and rank.

"Let us go to the library," said Myrtle, after the song and singer had each received its meed of praise: "Father has bought a new picture."

"What is it called?" asked Miss Raynor.

"*The Wounded Stag*, I think father said. I don't like it, do you Cousin Charlie? The poor creature is almost dead."

"No, Myrtle, I can't say I admire it. The man who gloats over a wounded, dying animal, is not likely to have much compassion for man." He regretted the words as soon as spoken, and added — "but there are many honorable exceptions"—which remark did not improve the rather strained situation of affairs.

Miss Raynor came to the rescue: "What beautiful books — such lovely bindings. I suppose you have a fine library, Mr. Melton."

"Not fine, but quite large. It contains reference works, an extensive and valuable Americana, some editions de luxe, many art works, and a copious manuscript library classified under some two hundred and fifty different headings; and so well classified by my stenographer that any song in MS., printed music, story, libretto, opera score, picture, or in fact, everything essential to my literary work can be found at a moment's notice. It is my work-shop, and a good workman always has his tools in place."

Miss Raynor was politely inquisitive: "Do you like pictures?"

"I have many, but not oil paintings. My collection consists of etchings, steel engravings, photogravures, carbon prints — there are few of the great paintings of the old or new masters of which I do not possess an adequate

copy in some artistic form. I have never been a lonesome man, for that quartette of lovely maidens — Drama, Music, Literature and Art, have always been my companions, although not always in their best clothes. But I have been self-introspective too long, already. I am going for a walk. Let us admire the beauties of nature supplied for self-confident man."

As they walked along the country road, he gathered yellow daisies and the purplish-blue blossoms of the chicory plant.

"Your dark hair, Miss Raynor, needs a contrast, which these yellow flowers will supply — while the blue will suit you best, Myrtle."

"You are gallant," said Miss Raynor.

"Yes, an old gallant — not a Gallant Knight of Old."

CHAPTER XXI.]

FAMILY SECRETS.

THERE was an old-fashioned garden at the rear of the Melton Mansion. A row of trees shut it out of sight from visitors, for the city architect who laid out the front grounds was a floral classicist, and would not tolerate anything "popular" in sight of passers-by or visitors. Trim, smoothly-shaven lawns with geometrically-designed flower beds, filled with masses of red, white, or yellow flowers, denoted, it must be confessed, both richness and simplicity.

Back of the row of trees nature was allowed to run riot. The flower beds had wooden borders about three inches high. The paths were covered with tan bark, for there was a leather factory in town, and Joshua Melton wished their garden (he and his wife being the "their") to be like the one which had been his pride when a boy. It was redolent with the perfume of old-fashioned blooms. There were astors, and four o'clocks, and balsams, morning-glories, nasturtiums, and sweet-williams, marigolds, lilac bushes, and giant sunflowers.

There was a long, wide, rustic seat under a symmetrical crab-apple tree, and Joshua Melton and his wife Tryphena were its occupants on a moonlight night. This rustic seat was their forum where domestic, business, and social questions were discussed — a sort of garden parliament, whose deliberations, however, rarely reached King Richard for his approval or veto.

"Tryphena, this is a beautiful night. If all 'she's' were as agreeable as the moon, no one could find fault even with a mother-in-law. Statistics show the more moon the more marriages. Now you and me, Tryphena, used to swing on the old man's gate and lay plans for the future."

"You won't have any future, Joshua, if you stay out here in this cold air. You'll catch your never-get-over-it. Go right in and put on your thick coat."

Joshua yawned and stretched: "I'm tired. I'm going to bed in a few minutes."

Tryphena, with considerable asperity, answered: "No, you ain't either. I ain't going, anyway."

Joshua flared up: "Well, go ahead. I guess I can go to bed without you. I ain't so particular as I was once about such things."

Tryphena's temper was rising: "No, you're like all the old men. You want all the bed and all the clothes."

Joshua was not disposed to give in: "So do you, and there's one way you can get them."

Tryphena was astonished at the prospect: "How so? I've fit for 'em till I'm tired."

Joshua chuckled: "Why, mother, just have a nice little bed all by yourself — on the English plan."

Tryphena was shocked: "I won't do it. What would folks say? That we'd separated at our time of life. I don't like English fashions, anyway, and you're an old fool, Joshua, to think of such a thing."

"I always was an old fool, in your eyes, Tryphena, but I'd rather be a fool than a rascal."

"I know what you mean, Joshua. You're hitting on my old beau, Joe Maitland. I know he forged something

and got ten years in jail, but Joe used to write me beautiful letters."

John Carpenter had wandered into the garden, and came upon the old couple, as Joshua replied: "Yes, but he wrote the wrong letters when he signed that note with another man's name."

John felt it incumbent upon him to disclose his presence: "Who's been forging another man's name? Anybody I know?"

Joshua was glad to have a witness: "A fellow named Joe Maitland more than forty years ago."

The name was very familiar to John, and he was unable to repress an exhibition of such knowledge.

"Did you ever hear of him?" asked Joshua.

"Why, no. I'm only twenty-nine years old."

"What of that?" snapped Joshua. "Don't you know your own father? He was born before you were. I kinder thought you acted as though you had heard of him afore."

"Oh, no, you are mistaken. I never heard the name before. Did you know him?"

Tryphena felt her time had come to take part in the conversation: "He was an old beau of mine, and father used to be awful jealous."

"No such thing!" exclaimed Joshua. "I cut him out easy enough when I really set to work."

"No, you didn't!" cried Tryphena. "The boys used to say that Phenie Owen was the hardest girl to court in the whole county."

"Phenie Owen?" exclaimed John involuntarily.

Tryphena was anxious to tell the whole story, now that she had begun: "Yes, sir. That was my name until it became Mrs. Joshua Melton. Now it's 'mother,' or 'old

woman,' or Tryphena, just as the old man there happens to feel. Come, Joshua, come in and fix up, and then we'll come out again."

"What for, mother?"

"Myrtle said her father and she were coming out in the garden this evening to talk over matters and things in general, and the weavers' strike in particular."

Joshua got up slowly: "I wish I was a child again, Phenie."

"Why?"

"Because you could take me in and dress me, and bring me out again. I'm awful tired."

"Tired? Lazy, more like. What do you do to get tired?" Tryphena took Joshua by the shoulders. "Come in, you big baby. You're in your second childhood anyway."

Joshua haw-hawed: "She's too sharp for me, Mr. Carpenter."

"I always was," and with this declaration she led her husband up the path to the house.

John seated himself on the rustic bench, lighted a cigar, and did some deep thinking. For many years he had felt that there was some mystery in his father's life. His father had told him that his own mother had died when he was an infant, and previous to his father's marriage to Caroline Grey, his life, so far as his son has been informed, was a sealed book. He remembered finding some letters in an old desk from Phenie Owen to Joe Maitland. When he had asked his father what they were, he had replied that they had belonged to a friend who was dead. He had asked his father why he kept another man's love letters, and the reply had been that his

dead friend Joseph Maitland wished him to return them to Phenie Owen if he ever found her.

"By Jove!" cried John. "I wonder if I have that letter with me that I cribbed out of the bundle. I'll show it to Mrs. Phenie Melton and see if she can recognize her own handwriting."

He took a number of papers and letters from his pocket and examined them carefully: "Here it is. Why, this letter has never been opened. That's deuced singular. Well, here goes. I'm my father's son, and his secrets are mine." He opened the letter, and glanced at the first page. "Dearest Phenie"—he turned quickly to the end of the letter — "Your lover, for eternity, Joseph Maitland."

John was dumbfounded. "Here's a go. My father's writing." He looked at the envelope. "I see now. In my haste I took a letter *from* Maitland *to* Phenie — which was never sent. I'll read it." He skipped certain parts.

"I have just left prison — I am going to begin a new life — with a new name; Joe Maitland will be dead to you and to the world. As James Carpenter, I am—"

John sprang up, and crushed the letter in his hand: "So, now, I have solved the mystery. Pleasant news to learn that my respected father was a forger — and a jailbird."

He turned suddenly. It was a woman's voice he heard, but the appositeness of the words challenged his attention.

"My father sold charcoal, and that was the cause of it."

John restored the unpleasant letter quickly to his pocket, and advanced to meet Huldah, for she proved to be the

vocalist. John grasped her arm: "Were you listening? Did you hear what I said? Answer me quickly."

"Let go of me!" cried Huldah as she freed herself from his grasp: "No, I wasn't listening. Shouldn't have heard any good of myself from you if I had."

John spoke sternly: "Are you telling the truth?"

Huldah faced John and looked him squarely in the eyes: "Do I look like a liar, Mr. Carpenter?"

John felt reassured: "No, you don't, Huldah. You look like Truth herself. I am real sorry I spoke so."

"So am I."

"Why?"

"Because you made a fool of yourself, Mr. Carpenter, and gave yourself away. I know now you must have said something you didn't want me to hear."

"I'm afraid I've been doing foolish things ever since I came here. You haven't told Miss Melton that I tried to kiss you, have you?"

"Not I. If you had kissed me, I wouldn't have told."

"Why not? I wish I had now."

"Because I wouldn't have folks know that I went so cheap. But Tom *may* tell. He was mad clean through."

"If there is a strike he will be out of his job. Don't you want me to try and get him a chance in New York?"

"I'm not Mrs. Potter yet. Until I am, Mr. Potter can attend to his own business affairs. If he loses his job, he's smart enough to get another."

"Not here."

"Well, he can go somewheres else. Walking is good."

"If he can't do better, let him come to my store in New York — James Carpenter & Son, Commission Merchants — and I'll give him a job, for your sake, Huldah."

"You're very kind, Mr. Carpenter. Perhaps if we should get married, and had a large family, and the children were sick, and he was out of work, and we were all pretty near starving, we *might* think of your offer. Just remember it, you know."

She laughed, actually turned up her nose beyond the limit that nature had fixed, and ran up the path.

John resumed his seat, and his interrupted soliloquy: "She won't peach. She's true Yankee stock. I was afraid she had intimated something to Myrtle, who, for some reason is as warm as an iceberg when I'm with her. But, my fears are groundless. Huldah is saucy, but honest — independent, but forgiving — especially to a good-looking young fellow — like myself. What blooming nonsense such thoughts are. But won't that letter give me a good hold on the governor. I'm hard up for money. Horses, yachts, autos and swell suppers are expensive luxuries. I'm thirty thousand dollars behind if I am a dollar."

He took a wallet from his pocket, and extracted a long, narrow slip of paper: "Melton's note for thirty thousand dollars, due to-day. Couldn't discount it at a decent rate, and had to hold. I'll use some of the proceeds for my pressing needs and tell the governor to charge it to the account of Joe Maitland and Phenie Owen."

Footsteps were heard in the path. "The folks are coming. Now I must be on my good behavior."

Richard and Myrtle came first, followed by Joshua and Tryphena. When they were seated, John turned to Mrs. Melton: "Is smoking offensive to you?"

"Oh no, don't mind me. Joshua always smoked good cigars until 1857. When the panic came he dropped to

pipe and tobacco, and he never got back again. That cigar smells good — how much did it cost?"

"Why, grandma," cried Myrtle, "What a question."

Myrtle had not noticed him—he could answer the question, but not to please her. "These cigars stand me in two hundred dollars a thousand."

"A thousand?" cried Mrs. Melton, "do you ever buy a thousand of 'em at once?"

"Frequently."

Myrtle moralized: "Twenty cents apiece. Enough to buy a good meal for a poor man."

John was pleased to have drawn Myrtle into the conversation: "I always take one after each meal, and a few in between."

Myrtle's humanitarian feelings were still uppermost: "How well off the poor would be if they had what the rich squander or throw away."

"You're wrong there," said her grandfather. "Statistics show that nothing is lost in the world. That cigar smoke may form part of a poor man's breakfast yet. The economy of nature is wonderful."

Myrtle retorted: "Well, rich men can't form part of nature then, for their economy is by no means wonderful."

Joshua was inclined to be reminiscent: "In the good old times, the rich and poor fared more nearly alike. Beans, brown bread, corned beef, hasty pudding, and rye cake was good enough for both of 'em, and a good mug of cider was healthier than the awful sour or sickish sweet wines you drink nowadays."

Richard, who had taken no part in the conversation now interposed: "Come, my good friends, let us change

the subject, and talk about something else than victuals and drink, poor men and rich men, pipes and cigars. What a beautiful moon there is to-night."

Myrtle was wedded to her idol. "How I wish it looked down on a happy world."

"Aren't you happy, Miss Myrtle?" asked John.

"Of course, she is," said her father. "Why shouldn't she be?"

Myrtle was not satisfied to drop the matter: "How can I be happy, when I think of the misery sure to follow the strike which seems inevitable?"

Richard was aroused by the personal implication: "'Twill serve them right. They should realize which side their bread is buttered on, and not act like fools. They'll strike, starve a little, then surrender and sue for the old times again."

"They'll never see 'em again," said Mrs. Melton, decidedly.

"Oh, yes, they will, Phenie. They'll come again just as sure as the sun rises. Look at the imports and exports."

"Yes, grandpa, but do imports and exports give the working man a better home, a more healthful place to work in, more and better food, and time for relaxation and education?"

Joshua saw that his son was tired of the discussion, and did not reply to Myrtle. "Mother, come in, and I'll read to you."

"Yes, Joshua, I'll come. I want to find out what becomes of 'That Husband of Mine.'"

"That husband of yours is going in to find out for himself."

They walked slowly up the path, followed by Myrtle. John turned to Richard: "By the by, Mr. Melton, did you know your accommodation note for thirty thousand dollars came due to-day? We didn't discount it, thinking you'd be better satisfied if it didn't go into the market on a shave, for money was awful tight a month ago."

"I will give you a check to-morrow," said Richard coldly.

John followed Myrtle up the path.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE IN LOVE — THE OTHERS IN POVERTY.

CAPT. FRANK DUDLEY went to camp with his command and performed his duty as a soldier. Jillson, a carder, who was in his company, and the other military man in Mr. Melton's employ, decided not to go and lose his place, so no one in camp was aware of the sacrifice that Frank had made.

When he returned from muster his mother and sister had not reproached him, but he realized that they looked forward to the future with apprehension. They loved their home, which had been embellished in the many ways that feminine fancy invents and accomplishes, and the possibility of being driven from it filled them with a dull foreboding. Youth rallies quickly, however, and one morning Nellie said to her mother: "We are unjust to Frank to indulge in such morose feelings. We are in his care and he will find a way to save our home. You say 'we must trust in the Lord,' and I say I do, but I look upon Frank as His chosen instrument."

Her mother did not reprove her, although what she had said did not conform closely to her Calvinistic belief in God's providence.

Frank did not wish to leave Meltonville, for it would take him from those he loved — his mother and sister. No more? He was walking one evening along a country road, when this question came to him forcibly. He threw himself upon the grass to think it out.

"I cannot get that affair at Mr. Melton's house out of my head. Myrtle seemed ready to say much more in my favor than she did, but was afraid of Carpenter. *Afraid* of her future husband? That's hardly a fair way to put it. What a fool I am! She thinks no more of me than of any of her father's workmen. But she does love my sister Nellie. My passion for her is a foolish one. It is safe in my own breast and shall stay there — and wither? I'm afraid not. Such love does not wither — no, instead, it kills the soil in which it grows." He saw a woman approaching, and arose to greet her: "Good evening, Mrs. Hudson."

"I'm so glad I've met you, Mr. Dudley. I heard you were back from camp, and I thought it my duty to see you."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"The same old story."

"Isn't your husband at work?"

"He has been to-day, but he won't be to-morrow. He says the weavers will vote to-night to strike."

"Against the cut-down?"

"Yes, but chiefly because that fellow Deming has been using his tongue so freely, and breeding discontent. He winds the men around his fingers."

"A poor man for a leader," agreed Dudley. "His passions make a bad man of him when they are excited. Is your husband bound to strike?"

"He, poor man, will have to do as the rest do. Deming told him this noon that he was going to boss this strike, and if a weaver went back on them they'd drive him out of the town."

"But Tom Potter is too brave to care for Deming's threats, and too level-headed to join in with him."

"That's what troubles me, Mr. Dudley. Tom Potter *is* going to join them, and how can I reason with Alfred. He says it must be right, if Tom Potter joins them. Oh, I almost forgot. I was so sorry to hear that you lost your place."

"Oh, that will come out all right. Don't worry about me. But what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. We are in debt, and out of everything in the house. Parker and Buskirk shut down on us long ago, and I wouldn't be mean enough to ask Mr. Thorpe to trust us with a strike coming on. My little girl is sick, and I am on my way to Dr. Dillingham's to ask him to come and see her, and trust me for some medicine."

"Is your husband at home?"

"No, he has gone to the Union. I couldn't have left Minnie and the children for so long, but Miss Melton let Huldah Simpson come and stay with them. Miss Melton is a fine young lady."

Frank was obliged to assent: "Yes, she has a good heart." His inward wish was that the young lady's good heart would beat for him."

Mrs. Hudson continued her lamentation. "Oh, what shall I do, if the doctor won't come? I can suffer, and, if need be, go without food, but it makes my heart seem ready to break when my dear little children are hungry or in pain. I sometimes wish, Mr. Dudley, that a good kind Heaven would take us all out of this hard, un pitying world."

"That's a natural wish when one is in trouble, Mrs. Hudson, but it is a wicked one." He took a bill from his

pocket-book. "Here are five dollars which I can spare. Take it and pay me when you can. The doctor won't refuse to come if you show him that."

Mrs. Hudson shook her head, and refused to take the money.

"But you must take it."

"No, you are out of work, and you will need it. Besides, I may be unable to ever repay you."

"It won't make any difference to me a hundred years hence. But it is growing late and you had better be on your way."

"You have made me feel so happy, Mr. Dudley. I can't find the right words to thank you with. You and Miss Melton are the two best friends I have in the world. If you two owned the mills—"

"There now, Mrs. Hudson, you are dreaming of an impossibility. Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Dudley. May Heaven bless you."

Again Dudley threw himself upon the turf, and resumed his musing. "She has a real sorrow, but one easily cured by money. My sorrow is a pleasure which I cannot grasp — and nothing can cure it — nothing can cure it — but the love of one — who — *likes* me for my sister's sake. If Mrs. Hudson's dream could be realized, and we, some day, should own the Melton Mills — bah! I'm more foolish than she is." He jumped up. "But this won't do. That Deming, everybody thinks, tried to set the mills on fire. If he is the leader, there's going to be trouble, and he may carry out his purpose. I'll ride over to Fairville on my wheel, get some of the boys together, and we'll be on hand if we are needed. Perhaps Mr. Melton and his future son-in-law may yet see the use of the citizen

soldier." On his way home he met Huldah Simpson with Elsie Brown.

"Good evening, Huldah, where are you going with Elsie? How is her father?"

"Her father is dead, Mr. Dudley. He died this afternoon. The doctor came in the morning and prescribed for him, but insisted upon being paid his fee of two dollars. That left no money to get the medicine with. His boy James had to work his dinner hour to make up lost time, and this poor little gal thought her father was sleeping — when he was *dead*. Isn't it horrible? I'd like to choke that Doctor Scrope for taking all the money they had in the house, and never asking whether they had any more to buy the medicine with."

"What are you going to do with Elsie? Jimmie is too young to support her and himself."

"Of course he can't. I found her crying side of her dead father when I went down this afternoon to carry him some beef tea and a bottle of wine that Miss Myrtle gave me to take to him. And now I'm going to take Elsie to the poorhouse. She has no other home. Tom's going to look after Jimmie."

"No, no, Huldah. That's too bad. She musn't go. I'm afraid Old Rand and his wife won't treat her well. They don't like child paupers because they can't work on the farm."

"If I had a home of my own, Mr. Dudley, she shouldn't go. I'll have one soon, maybe, and then she'll come away lively."

"You and I must befriend her, Huldah. My conscience would always upbraid me if I allowed them to cage this little bird in the almshouse. I will take her home with

me, and try and do my duty with this little fatherless one."

"I'll make her some new dresses and fix her up some. She's been neglected, poor child. I know Miss Myrtle will give her lots of things."

"Don't mention it to Miss Melton, at present, Huldah. My mother and sister will do all that needs to be done."

"Good night, Captain. I must run home or Mr. Melton will dock my wages half-a-day. I shall laugh all the way instead of crying as I expected to. Good-bye, Elsie."

She gave the child a quick, convulsive embrace, kissed her, and then walked quickly homewards.

"Come along, Elsie. I'll take you home, and my mother will put you in a nice little bed. Don't cry any more. Huldah and I won't let you go to Mr. Rand's."

Generous, good-hearted Mrs. Dudley soon made the little waif at home, and, when the child's happiness for a while, at least, seemed assured, Captain Dudley started for Fairville to get his companions into fighting trim in case their services should be needed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PUT NONE BUT IRISHMEN ON GUARD.

CAPTAIN DUDLEY reached Fairville and, after explaining the condition of affairs in Meltonville, a score of his company agreed to don their uniforms and accompany him.

"It's a little irregular," he said, "but if we save life and prevent the destruction of property I don't think my superior officers or the civil authorities will complain."

Fully equipped and armed, the little company marched to Meltonville. Captain Dudley's first act was to place sentries on each of the roads leading to the mills with orders to question and detain, if necessary, all suspicious appearing persons. A deserted barn was improvised as a guard house and a corporal with half-a-dozen men was left in charge.

One of the men stationed as a sentry was an Irishman named Dennis McCarty. He had lived formerly in Meltonville, but had gone to the Fairville mills because he said they had there "fewer hours, better pay, and a real gentleman for a boss." McCarty did not love "soldiering," but it gave him an opportunity to be with the boys, and like all Irishmen, he was social, and unhappy when isolated. His duties as sentry were not to his liking: "What's the use of kapin' a man out of his bed? I ain't afraid to go to bed widout a sintry, and divil a man in the rigiment but would trust a dog sooner than a sleepy omadhoun like mesilf. But orders is orders, and it was an Englishman that onct said 'Put none but Irishmen on guard.'"

He patrolled his beat for some time and not a sound broke the stillness. Suddenly his attention was attracted by footsteps: "Whist! what's that? Come out of there, you spalpeen, till I interview yer." He listened, but all was quiet. Then the footsteps again: "Come here, now, and give the countersign, Abraham Lincoln, or I'll make a cowl'd corpse of yer. Do yer mind that, now?" A man advanced until he was in full view: "Begorra, it's Tom Potter, one of ould Melton's weavers."

"Ha! Is that you, McCarty? A fine evening for a walk."

"It's not walkin' I am. Captain Dudley said there was to be the devil's own doin's here, and he called us out so we could take a hand in the fight."

"I hope there won't be any fighting, but Dudley is a brick. We may need you, for Melton's weavers have struck. I've just come from the meeting."

"Good luck to 'em. I'd like to hit him wid a brick mesilf."

"I'm afraid they'll use something worse, McCarty. There's likely to be a riot, and maybe a big fire. Deming is at the head of them, and he means destruction. I must see Captain Dudley at once."

"Have you some countersigns?"

"Stop foolin', McCarty. I must see Captain Dudley. You must think of some way."

"Never a way. Never a man passes here widout the countersign unless it's Abraham Lincoln, rest his soul in pace."

"Is that the countersign, McCarty — Abraham Lincoln?"

"Go away wid yes. Do yer suppose I'd confiss it, if it was. Sthep back! Sthep back!"

"But, McCarty, think of the riot."

"There'll be no riot unless you make one."

"No more foolin', McCarty. This is a matter of life or death. Fire your gun and bring the guards. I'll surrender and take the consequences."

"Faith, and so should I have to. If I shoot, begorra, you'll have to be taken off in a wheelbarrow."

As Tom stepped forward, McCarty cried: "Sthep back! Sthep back, I say agin!"

"You'll be to blame for a bad job, McCarty, but I'll go and not bother you any more. There's some good whiskey in this bottle — it will warm you up when the dew begins to fall."

"Thank you, Mr. Potter. Come 'round in the mornin' when the riot's over — I'll let you by then."

Tom made his way into the woods, soliloquizing: "It's mighty lucky I took that bottle out of Deming's pocket. Do evil that good may come is not such bad religion after all." He made his way farther into the wood intending to circle around McCarty, and get the other side of him. To his disgust when he reached the road again, he found himself within twenty feet of McCarty, who seemed oblivious to ordinary noises.

After Tom's departure McCarty examined the bottle: "Only half gone. I'll sit down and enjoy my sup. There's no fun in drinkin' standin' up. It goes down to your boots too quick, intirely." He smacked his lips. "Ivery sintry should have a bottle of whiskey to help him keep guard. If I was in command I'd have a bottle of good old stuff for countersign and divil a man would get into camp widout presentin' it."

Tom decided upon a strategic move. McCarty had stood his gun up against a tree, fortunately on the side nearest his hiding place. He had a piece of stout cord in his pocket. On hands and knees he finally reached the gun and tied the cord about the butt of the gun. Then he retreated into the wood. He gave the cord a quick pull and the gun fell to the ground with what, in the quiet of the night, seemed a loud crash. He hauled the gun towards him, and as soon as it was in his grasp, discharged it.

McCarty jumped up astonished, and bewildered from his potations: "Fire! Murder!! Thaves!!! Where is my gun?" He pointed the empty bottle. "Surrender, you rascal, or you're a dead man."

He was not lacking in bravery, and dashed into the wood. There was a loud tramping of feet, what sounded like a scuffle,— then he emerged from the wood leading Tom, who still held the gun in his hand.

"You thafe of the world. To stale a gun from a soldier, and waste the State's ammunition. Begorra, I'll court-martial yer mesilf, and drum your head in with this." And he held up the bottle in a threatening attitude.

"Hold your jaw, McCarty. Act like a man. The guard's comin'. I won't blow on you. Here's your gun."

A corporal with two men arrived at double-quick.

"What's the cause of that report, Private McCarty?"

"I fired the gun."

"What for?" asked the corporal.

McCarty pointed at Tom: "At that spalpeen. He tried to bribe me first — what a mane game to try on an Irishman. Then he tried to stale my gun from me, but I was too many for him. I was just goin' to brain him

with the butt of it, when by some unaccountable manes the thrigger got caught in something, and it went off before I could stop it."

The corporal took the gun and examined it.

"Where did this string tied on the butt come from?" he asked.

McCarty felt that the situation demanded a full explanation. "Begorra, there must have been some bird trap set 'round here, and my gun got into it. Now, isn't that wonderful?"

"That will do, McCarty," said the corporal. He pointed to Tom: "Guard, take that man before Captain Dudley. McCarty, you'll be relieved in an hour. No more bird traps, remember."

As Tom passed McCarty, he said, with a laugh: "Mr. Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Potter is going to see Captain Dudley on particular business. Don't break that bottle."

"Whist, you divil," said McCarty, as he shouldered his gun and resumed his patrol.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THE STRIKE IS OUR SWORD."

MR. PIERRE GAGNON had reported the failure of his mission. He dwelt particularly upon the interest and sympathy expressed by Miss Melton.

"That's all right," said Deming. "Our boss don't wear petticoats—his suit is made of steel, but the strike's our sword and he will find his armor of no avail. I demand a vote, at once, on the resolutions presented by me at our last meeting."

Loud cries of "Question!" came from all parts of the hall. Mr. Bentwich called for another reading of the resolutions, and Secretary Potter read them in a loud voice. "Those in favor" said Mr. Bentwich. There was a long, loud "Aye!" "Those opposed"—an ominous silence.

"Now, boys," cried Deming, "let's go and read these resolutions to Mr. Melton. He hasn't had a chance to vote on them yet." This remark was followed by a general laugh, a volley of cheers, and cries of "Come along!" "Lead on Deming!"

Tom faced Deming: "What are you going to do at Melton's?"

"Demand our rights."

"And if he refuses?"

Deming answered fiercely: "I could kill him and burn his mills."

Tom's voice was full of eagerness: "Shall you do it?"

"If the boys will back me up. I'm ready for anything. I've been a slave long enough." Deming mounted the

platform again: "I move we adjourn to Mr. Melton's private residence and give him a neighborly call."

He ran to the doorway, and the men pressed after him.

"Are you coming, Potter?"

"Don't you fear, Deming, I'll be with you."

After telling John that he would give him a check for the note in the morning, Richard sat upon the veranda and thought of his business affairs. He was a well man, now, and he must resume his duties at the mill. Forbes, his chief overseer, had been in charge since Dudley's discharge, but a firmer hand was needed. He had been a successful man, and that success, he felt, was due to the fact that he had had his own way in everything. He was a "Captain of Industry," and it was no better than mutiny for his operatives to ask for anything that he did not choose to give them. He remembered that he had called them paupers. What would they be if he did not give them work? It might have been his lot to be an operative instead of a master — what would he have done? His duty, as it was forced upon him — ever seeking to improve his condition. He was a man who would have become a master even if his wealth had not been largely inherited. The history of the world shows that men who inherit money do one of two things; they either squander their patrimony and taste poverty and become a burden upon their relatives and friends; or, they make more money, using their inheritance simply as a pedestal upon which to rear a financial monument. Such men would become rich without the inheritance. So, to a great extent, it is folly to inveigh against those who inherit riches. Their money will be either dissipated or increased, and, in either

case, the public benefits indirectly. When the men of wealth really believe, as has been said by one of them, that "it is a crime to die rich," more money, either honest or "tainted" will revert back to those by the sweat of whose brows it has been largely accumulated.

And yet it must be remembered that much wealth is an "unearned increment" due to the rise in values caused by the concentration of large numbers of people in large cities, leading to great municipal expenditures, and abnormal activity in all lines of productive and distributive industry.

Richard was aroused from his meditations, which may or may not have been similar to those just written, by a light footstep on the gravelled path. He saw that it was Myrtle's maid.

"Huldah!"

"Sir!"

"Where are you going?"

"Down to the gate."

John had been disappointed, for Myrtle had vanished into the house before he reached it. He was not in an amiable mood as he returned to the veranda and heard Richard ask Huldah: "Going to meet that Tom Potter?"

"No, I ain't going to meet him. If he should come along, I shan't run away."

John was out of sorts with anything feminine: "Impudent as ever — perfectly brazen."

Richard was equally unsusceptible: "Huldah, I wish you to understand that if you remain in my employ you are to have nothing to say to the strikers. They would be very glad to use you as a spy upon me."

Huldah did not lose her spirit of independence: "If

they want to hire me as a spy, they will probably offer me more pay than you give me — and I won't work for them without giving you notice."

She ran down the path.

"Can you trust her?" asked John.

"I'd trust that girl's word quicker than that of any man I know. She'll never break it."

"I am glad to hear that, Mr. Melton." John thought that his own secret was safe. Why, yes, hadn't Huldah said that nothing would induce her to tell — but Tom?

Richard took a wallet from his pocket: "I might as well fix up that note matter now. I had a check all ready to send you, if you hadn't come." He passed a check to John, who, in turn, handed him the note.

"There, that's off my mind. I never gave a note before except for stock, and I never will again. What's that?" Clamorous voices were heard.

John smiled: "Some country wights coming home from a good time."

"No," cried Richard, rising, "those voices are angry ones. Listen, John." They were heard again, louder than before.

Huldah came running up the path: "Oh, Mr. Melton — my wind is most gone, I ran so fast."

Richard and John asked in the same breath: "What's the matter?"

"Oh, the weavers are coming to see you again — all of 'em. They've got lanterns and clubs, and they're yelling at the tops of their voices."

John took Richard by the arm: "Come in, Mr. Melton. You are too ill to see them to-night. Come in, and I'll tell them you are not able to speak with them."

"No, John," said Richard, decidedly. "Huldah, you go to Miss Myrtle. You, too, John. They are coming to see *me*, and I will not disappoint them. They shall never say Richard Melton was a coward and dared not face them — single-handed, and alone. Go in, both of you. I can deal with these hounds."

Huldah and John obeyed his command. Richard stood expectant, but defiant. The voices grew louder, then died away. A man came quickly up the path. It was Deming:

"What do you wish?"

Deming replied in an insolent tone: "I want to see you."

"Come to-morrow. I'm not in the habit of receiving visitors, such as you, at so late an hour."

"Better change your habits to suit the times, then."

"You are insolent. What do you mean?"

"I mean that *we* have come to talk business with you, and we hain't got any time to spare."

"One question: Have you voted to strike?"

"To a man!"

"Then I have nothing to say to you. Your money will be ready when you come for it. I shall engage new hands immediately."

"Perhaps not. This town will be a poor place for scabs, and we voted to do something else as well as strike."

"Do as you please. Your future actions don't concern me."

Deming came up the steps and stood close to Richard on the veranda. "But they do, though. Do you think we are going to let you strike us where we live and not strike back? Don't be too sure that your life or your mills will be spared if you drive us to do our worst."

Richard's anger rose to a high pitch: "Threats? Leave my premises at once." He grasped Deming by the shoulder. "Leave my grounds, or I'll have you kicked out." Richard pushed Deming to the top of the steps. Deming said, sternly: "Take off your hand!" Richard gave him a push that sent him down the steps. Deming caught Richard by the arm and dragged him from the veranda. On the ground they wrestled, but Deming tripped his antagonist and threw him violently. Then he cried:

"Come along, men! Come along! The tyrant is under foot!"

The weavers came running up the path, some with lanterns, others with torches. Cries were heard from within the house, and Myrtle, John, Mr. and Mrs. Melton, and Huldah even, were spectators of the unwonted scene. Myrtle knelt and took her father's head in her lap: "Who dared to strike my father?"

Deming answered: "I did it, but there's not a man here but would have dared to do as much — and more."

"Brave men!" cried Myrtle. "Fifty to one, and he old and sick."

"A brave man he," retorted Deming. "A thousand dollars to our one, and yet he could starve our wives and children."

Myrtle dropped her head, and tears come in her eyes. She could not answer. Her father revived, and rose slowly to his feet. There were cries of "Hurry up!" "Business!" "Get his answer!"

Deming felt sure of his support: "Enough of this fooling. Once more I ask you in the name of these men, my fellow-workmen, will you withdraw the order for the cut-down?"

Myrtle cried: "Oh, father, think of me. What is the money after all? We have enough, and to spare." She turned to Deming: "He will not cut down your wages. He shall not! Father — you will grant me this favor — will you not, dear father?"

Richard, bruised and bleeding, stood erect, and dignified. He first addressed his daughter: "Myrtle, it cannot be as you wish." Then he turned to Deming: "What I have is my own, under the law. I will do with it as I please, under the law. That is my answer — final, and irrevocable."

Myrtle threw her arms about his neck: "Oh, father, see those men. Your life is in danger. John! John!! run for some help, or they will kill my father."

"Courage, Myrtle, I will bring assistance." John started to enter the house.

"Stop, young man!" cried Deming. "Stay where you are, if you value your life. Here, Bentwich. Place a guard at the front gate and see that no one, unless he is one of us, leaves or enters. Here, Beach, are you there?"

"Here, sah!"

"Run to Davis as fast as your big feet will let you—"

"Big feet, sah?"

Deming grasped Beach by the collar and shook him until his eyes were doubled in size. "To Davis, you idiot, and tell him to set fire to the mills at once."

"Yes, sah," said Beach, and he ran as fast as his big feet could carry him.

"Now, men," cried Deming, "what shall we do with this vulture who would eat us alive?"

His question was answered by cries of — "Hang him!" "String him up!" "Shoot him!" "Kill him!"

Deming was an incarnation of the spirit of revolution: "You hear the verdict, Richard Melton. It is given by a jury of your peers, as provided by the Constitution. We are all American citizens. Bring the rope."

Until now Myrtle had not really anticipated that her father was in serious danger. She knew Deming for a wild, irresponsible man — some called him an Anarchist — but she recalled the fact that Dudley had considered him the best weaver in the mills. He had a large family — a wife and eight children — out of work, with no prospects — virtually blacklisted — no wonder that his ungovernable passions had submerged his reason. All this passed through her mind — but when she saw the rope in Deming's hands — one feeling only was in her heart — her love for her father. She stepped forward, her hands raised in protest: "Men, American citizens you call yourselves, do you dare to do this foul deed? Steep your hands in blood, and make me, who would have befriended you, an orphan! Think again, before you become murderers."

Deming was unresponsive to her impassioned appeal: "We've done talking and thinking — we're acting now." There were loud cries from the men: "Hurry up!" "Teach him his lesson." Probably not one in ten of the strikers thought Deming would proceed to the farthest extremity. The strike was a protest against many disregarded grievances in the past, the statement of which had been met with oaths, or sneers, or cold contempt when presented. Now was the time to frighten the "boss," and the next time they complained he would fear the consequences, and give their requests prompt attention.

Richard was sitting upon the lower step, apparently unmindful of his danger. Perhaps he, too, thought the

whole affair a "bluff," and that the contest, after all, was only one of will power — victory to fall to the most stubborn one. Myrtle sank upon her knees beside her father, murmuring: "Oh, God! Mercy! Mercy!!" She turned her face bathed in tears to Deming: "Is there no hope?"

He answered: "None!"

There were loud cries heard — "Stop him—" and the reply — "Get out of the way, I'm goin' in." There was the sound of a scuffle, of blows given and taken,— Gulson and Bentwich were pushed one side, and, with a bound, Tom Potter stood beside Myrtle and her father.

"What are you up to, Deming?"

"None of your business?" This retort was greeted with laughter and shouts by the men.

"What are you going to do with that rope? What devilish work have you on hand?"

"Oh, Tom, they're going to hang my father — Save him! Save him!!"

Deming's wrath was turned against Tom: "Here's a man who promised to stand by us — and he's turned traitor."

There were cries of "Hang him, too!" String 'em both up!"

Tom's answer to the accusation was — "You're a liar!"

"Prove it!" yelled Deming, who had lost all control of himself. "Richard Melton must die, for we have sworn it. If you are not a traitor and a coward put the rope on his neck yourself. If you back out, we'll hang you both."

He passed the rope to Tom who pushed it away from him. "I'll be damned if I'll hang a man. Shootin' is

more in my line." He drew a revolver. "I'll settle him with this."

During the altercation Joshua and his wife had been transfixed with fear, powerless to aid or suggest. If Richard had remained on the veranda Huldah would have got him into the house through a window or door, but he was beyond her reach. John Carpenter, careful of his own life, had remained passive since the command and accompanying threat from Deming. This was a time that tried a man's soul, and his was found wanting. When Tom's last words were heard all were astonished. Huldah shook her fist at him, while Myrtle clasped her hands weakly, and entreated Tom without speaking.

Tom cocked his revolver: "Give him time, men, to say good-bye to his daughter, and his old father and mother. Turn your heads the other way. Hardly the expression on your faces to soothe a dying man."

For the time being, Tom was the master spirit. Even Deming obeyed the request. At the instant a flash of light shot up above the trees, followed by another, and another.

Tom whispered in Myrtle's ear — "Courage!"

Deming yelled: "See, there, boys, the mills are on fire!" The men greeted this announcement with shouts and cheers. "Come Potter, hurry him up. We want to go to the fire."

Again Tom whispered the word — "Courage!" the two guards who had been placed at the gate came running up the path. "The soldiers are coming. They're at the gate now."

Deming pulled out his pistol. "Tom Potter, you're the traitor that has sold us out." He fired; the bullet

aimed at Tom's heart was imbedded in the inner side of his left arm. Deming and the men rushed at Tom. He fired, not at Deming's heart, but at his knee. Deming pitched forward upon his face. Tom put Richard and Myrtle behind him: "Keep back, men. Remember, this counts seven before it runs down. I'm with you on the strike, but I never kill except in self-defence. That's fightin' 'cordin' to Tom Potter."

The end came soon. Captain Dudley and his men covered the strikers with their guns.

"Say, Captain," cried Tom — "you look after Deming. He stopped a bullet. Come boys, let's put out the fire." He started on the run, and the men, whose minds but a short time before were full of murder and destruction, followed him, intent on preserving the buildings within which they gained a living for themselves, their wives, and children.

Such are our American workingmen,— not swayed by a common impulse, but having in them feelings born of memories of suffering and oppression in other lands. Easily kept in good humor, and subservient, and as easily angered and turned into a turbulent mob. And what is the remedy? An educating upward by good leaders. The deprivation of the bad leader's power by anticipating all reasonable requests, and the putting of facts in the hands of good leaders that will enable them to show the folly, or worse, of unreasonable demands.

The mutinous soldier is court-martialed and shot. Mutinies and strikes spring from the same cause — a grievance. Shooting soldiers has never stopped mutinies and shooting workingmen will never stop strikes. As long as the mind dominates the body, man will cry out, will rebel

against injustice. If the cost of powder and guns and cannon was put into works of education upon financial, industrial, and social topics, and they were distributed free by the State, there would soon be no need for the powder, or guns, or cannon, and instead of the epaulets and chevrons of the soldier the proudest marks of distinction would be the pen and book of the teacher. Universal peace will never come from Conferences at The Hague. Its only true and stable foundation is in the heart of each individual man.

CHAPTER XXV.

"OH, ABSALOM, MY SON!"

MRS. TRYPHENA MELTON adjusted her steel-rimmed spectacles, and turned over the pages of her large-print Bible in search of a certain chapter. When she found it, she read: "And the King was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: And as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Mrs. Melton wiped away the fast-falling tears: "O, Richard would that I could have died for you, — my son, my only one!"

A loving arm was placed about her! "Crying, again, mother. What's the use? Richard is dead, and no power on earth can bring him back to us." The old lady sobbed. "I didn't mean to speak harshly, mother."

"I know it, father. But every time I read King David's lament for Absalom, I can't keep back the tears. Have they found any signs of that man Deming?"

"No, but they are hunting for him. There's a detective from the city — John sent for him. What good will it do if they do catch him? We can't prove that he killed Richard — it was his weak heart gave way."

Mrs. Melton did not look at the legal points of the case. She saw only the sad result — the death of her only son. "But they ought to. He's a murderer, if ever one lived. But for him, Richard would be alive and well."

"You couldn't prove that before a jury, mother. To be

sure he can be tried for inciting a riot, and shooting Tom Potter. Wasn't it funny the men helped Tom put out the fire?"

Mrs. Melton thought only of her loss: "The law! The law!! It wasn't so in the good old times, when we were young, Joshua. There wasn't so many loopholes for murderers to creep through, and the public sympathy used to be for the family and friends of the victim, and not, as it is now, for the *poor criminal*."

"That's so, mother. Statistics show that hanging won't stop murdering as long as the gallows are surrounded by a respectable audience, and the newspapers praise the wretch who has made his peace with Heaven, and dies 'game,' as they call it. But let us go and see how Mr. Hudson is; he was burned pretty badly when the roof of the shed fell in."

"I'll go, Joshua; but this last month has been a perfect wilderness to me. The strike, and the riot, and Richard's sudden death the next day, and Myrtle's determination to run the mills instead of selling them as we advised — everything seems wrong side up."

"Well, the mills are right side up, anyway, and have been running night and day the past fortnight on orders from that new firm — I forget their name. Come along, mother. On our way back, we'll go in and see 'the happy family,' as Tom Potter calls the mill hands, now."

Huldah looked after them as they went down the path full of so many sad memories. She saw Mrs. Melton drop her head on her husband's shoulder, and his arm encircle her. "I never saw such a house. Everybody is crying, or just getting ready to. I'm ready to cry, too, but it's because I'm so happy. Tom is an overseer, now, and we're

going to be married awful soon, for Tom says that's the only way he can save money. I'm sorry for Miss Myrtle's and the old folks' sake that Mr. Melton is dead, but I guess many homes will be happier now that Miss Myrtle runs the mills — and the superintendent, Mr. Dudley, is the best man in the world."

A loud "What's that?" caused Huldah to jump, and her heart beat fast. Then she recognized the voice: "Why, how you scared me, Tom. Don't you dare do that again."

"Well, you astonished me by what you said about Frank Dudley. Say it again."

"No, I won't."

"I'll say it for you, then. 'Mr. Dudley is the best man in the world.'"

"Except—"

"You didn't except anybody."

"But I was going to say—"

"What?"

Tom came very close to Huldah, as though he was afraid he would miss her next words.

"Excepting Tom."

Tom took her in his arms and kissed her.

"That was the sweetest kiss I ever had in my life."

"Better than the first one you stole a month ago?"

"Yes, very much better."

"And I've always heard that you men considered stolen kisses the sweetest."

"Such fellows as John Carpenter may —"

Huldah pouted, and drew away from him.

"I didn't mean to rake up old affairs, Huldy, but stolen kisses are only taken from the mouth, while that last one, I know, came right from your heart."

"You're a foolish boy, Tom. You said just those same words a month ago. You men are all flatterers, when you have your own way. If I should give you the mitten, after all, I suppose you'd commit suicide."

"I won't stay here and have you talk so. I'll go right back to the mill."

Huldah ran to the door and barred his exit, by stretching out her arms.

"You shan't go, either."

"I'll stay then."

"Huldah laughed: "Oh, you great donkey. Just as though a great big man like you couldn't push me away from the door, and go. There's no reason for your stopping a minute longer."

"Allowing I'm a donkey, I had as good a reason for stopping as that man in the Bible did."

"Oh, you mean Balaam. How do you make that out?"

"Why he stopped because an angel stood in his way — and that's the reason I did."

Huldah came away from the door, and putting her hands on Tom's shoulders, looked into his face, with a serious expression on her own.

"You're too good for anything, Tom, but so silly sometimes. The idea of comparing me to an angel."

"You said Carpenter called you 'a princess,' and I want to get a peg higher than he did. You are my angel, anyway, Huldah."

Tom embraced her, then kissed her repeatedly, unaware that John was an amused witness of the love-making. "The person of an American working girl—" At the sound of John's voice Tom and Huldah sprang apart, she blushing violently — John finished his remark, "is

as sacred as that of any lady in the land." He laughed, satirically. "Don't mind me. Continue your osculations. I suppose it is all right. You are probably engaged."

Tom retorted: "Yes, engaged, and likely to be married. Perhaps you can't say as much."

John was not disposed to continue a discussion that was so closely personal. Seating himself, he said in the dignified way that so well suited his gentlemanly appearance: "Will you be so kind, Miss Simpson, as to inform Miss Melton that I am here."

Huldah could only mutter—"Yes, sir," as she left the room, while Tom, after regarding John's immaculate get-up from head to foot, slammed the door instead of swearing, and went on his way to the mill.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ESTRANGEMENT.

WHILE the events which have been recorded were taking place, and for which a tragic close was averted, Cousin Charlie was in the city, having been called there for a conference with the publishers of one of his books. On his return, the story was told to him by Myrtle, and what he said has been already given — at the end of a preceding chapter, the first words of his comment being — “Such are our American workingmen.”

After Huldah's departure in search of Miss Melton in order to inform her of Mr. Carpenter's unexpected arrival, that young man had ample opportunity to consider his past and prospective relations with the Melton family. While Richard lived, he had a strong friend at court. Since his death, after a month's absence, great changes might have taken place, and John was there to see the lay of the land. His reflections were not very satisfactory:

“I wonder if what that fellow said was prophetic. ‘Engaged, and likely to be married. Perhaps you can't say as much.’ Can Myrtle have given her maid to understand that she intends to refuse me, and has it spread among the servants and mill hands? I'll not believe it of her. She is a lady, and would not humiliate me in such a way. I'll be ready, whichever way the wind blows. She has always used a sharp tongue to me, but I never

felt it until the evening of the strike. Women are so unreasonable. What good would it have done to imperil my life? Melton was a hard master and brought it on himself. But his daughter is rich, and I'll never say die so long as there is a ray of hope."

When Myrtle came in, dressed in black, John thought she had never looked more beautiful. Then he noticed that she was not alone. A young miss, of about twelve, had accompanied her. Myrtle seated herself, and drew the child towards her, and stroked her hair lovingly.

"Good morning, Mr. Carpenter."

John did not return the salutation in words. His eyes were fixed upon the child. He had seen her before, but when? "Whom have we here — some relative?"

"No, she is not a relative," Myrtle replied.

"The child of some friend, I suppose."

"Her mother died when Elsie was a baby."

There was a sneer in John's voice: "Ah, I see. You have adopted a child to keep you company."

"No, from a better motive, if I must explain. She is the daughter of one of my father's workmen. He died the day of the—" She stopped suddenly, and caressed the child who clung to her.

John knew when he had seen the child: "Yes, I remember. She came to get some money — said her father was sick — and your father told her to wait until next pay day."

"I wish I had known it sooner. Her father's life might have been saved. Tom Potter gave her the money — but it came too late. Huldah was on the way with her to the poorhouse, but Captain Dudley insisted upon taking her to his own home. His sister Nellie told me the particulars and I felt it my duty to provide for her myself — and I shall always be a friend to her."

The mention of Captain Dudley angered John. "How romantic! The captain and yourself join in the pleasant duty of conducting an orphan's home. Everyone to their taste — but you will greatly oblige me by sending her away while I talk to you — that is, if you can deprive yourself of her company for so long."

"Go and find Huldah, Elsie." She kissed the child, who ran from the room.

"Myrtle, you spoke my surname very coldly when you came in."

"Coldly?"

"Yes, coldly. 'Mr. Carpenter' in an almost frigid tone. I thought lovers were always warm in tone and cheerful in action."

"Do you forget that I am just recovering from a cruel blow — that I am an orphan?"

"No, Myrtle, I do not forget it. For a month it has been my ever-present thought." He stood by Myrtle's chair. "I cannot know, but I can imagine how you must feel to lose your father's care so suddenly — but Myrtle" — he took her unresisting hand in his — "a husband's care and love often supplants that of a father, even while he is living. Now that yours is dead, should I not be a happy man to feel that I shall be *all* to you, as you have been *all* to me during these six long, weary months or probation? Myrtle, shall you make me happy by fixing the day for our wedding?"

Myrtle withdrew her hand from his. "Oh, father, would you were here to advise me. I am so unhappy."

"Unhappy? Speak frankly, Myrtle,— our futures depend upon what you say now."

Myrtle was silent. She was thinking of that afternoon

when Miss Raynor sang Cousin Charlie's song "The Gallant Knights of Old." Why had she not gone to Cousin Charlie and told him her troubles.

"Myrtle?" The tone was inquiring, but commanding. He was waiting impatiently for her answer.

She arose and stepped away from him. "I will, John, since you wish it. I cannot marry you."

"Why, what impediment can there be to our union? Your father wished it."

"I do not love you as I wish to love the man whom I marry."

"Do you love another?"

"No one has ever spoken to me of marriage but yourself."

"You evade the question, Myrtle. This is ungenerous. I am the one to find fault with the quality of your love for me — not yourself. Do you doubt my love for you?"

"I doubt no one. Forgive me, but my mind is no nearer made up than it was six months ago. I have tried to love you, but I have failed."

"But you need a husband, who loves *you*. You are young and inexperienced, with a big business on your hands which you have not the financial training to manage successfully. If you remain single, whom can you depend upon to carry on the mills?"

Huldah announced "Mr. Dudley."

"Mr. Carpenter, my business manager, Mr. Dudley."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman before," said John. His mental comment was: "He's provided for, it seems."

"Mr. Dudley, please step into the next room. I will join you presently."

“Certainly, Miss Melton.”

As he retired, Frank bowed to Myrtle and John, but the latter ignored the courtesy.

“Myrtle, have you so little regard for your dead father’s wishes that you re-engage a man who insulted him. A man whom your father discharged ignominiously?”

“You forget that Mr. Dudley saved my father’s life — from the mob. Captain Dudley did his duty, and my father said so before he died.”

John felt checkmated at every point, and his evil nature came to the surface. “Perhaps this young man — this philanthropic, Christian soldier, has usurped my place in your heart.”

Myrtle’s reply was full of passion: “If you think so, why do you not say it boldly like a man, and not insinuate? I deny your right to catechize me in such a manner. My relations with Mr. Dudley are of a business nature, and so long as he performs his duties faithfully, I shall retain him in his present position.”

Overcome by her feelings, she threw herself into a chair, and covered her eyes with her trembling hands.

John thought “This is my last chance.” Then he said to Myrtle: “I should not wish my affianced wife to become so greatly interested in one of her — *workmen*. If you mean to marry me, whether you love me or not, it will be easy for you to grant me one request. I wish you to discharge this Dudley instantly, and in my presence.”

Myrtle arose, her hands tightly clasped, her mouth firmly set, her cheeks white with suppressed emotion: “I will not do it!”

“Then, Miss Melton, please consider our implied engagement at an end.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

JOHN, THE PENMAN.

A GREAT wave of joy filled Myrtle's heart when she heard John say that it was his wish that their engagement be considered at an end. There had never been an actual engagement, and Myrtle's finger had worn no ring. It had been an understanding — an informal arrangement to be made permanent, both contracting parties willing, in six months. The period of probation had passed, and they were now no more to each other. Womanlike, Myrtle's spirits rebelled at being so quickly given up.

"Be it so, then. I do not believe you ever loved me as you professed, and as my father said you did."

"Your father always told me that you were deeply in love with me. But I noticed that such a declaration was usually followed by a request to aid him financially — with a loan, or by discounting his note."

"I thank Heaven that I am free from one who could talk love to me as you did, and then imply, as you have done, that my father intended to barter me for money."

"The truth seems disagreeable to you, Miss Melton."

"It is not the truth, Mr. Carpenter. I will not believe it of my dear father, and the books show that we owe your firm but a few hundred dollars which I will pay you to-day."

"That is our merchandise account. Our note account may not be so evenly balanced."

Their conversation might have developed more acrimony, but it was broken in upon by the entrance of Mr. Dudley, who had Mr. Melton's note book in his hand.

“Excuse my intrusion, Miss Melton — and Mr. Carpenter — but upon examining Mr. Melton’s note book I find one entered in the name of James Carpenter & Son, due June 1, for thirty thousand dollars, which is not marked paid, nor can I find the note among his papers.”

Myrtle asked: “Was the note paid, Mr. Carpenter?”

John thought quickly: “Was the note lost? Perhaps it disappeared the night of the riot.” He replied: “No, it has not been paid.”

“That is strange,” said Dudley. “Among the checks returned from the bank I find one for thirty thousand dollars drawn to your order, Mr. Carpenter, and dated the first of June.”

Myrtle was growing suspicious: “How do you explain that check, Mr. Carpenter, if the note, as you say, has not been paid?”

John felt that a crisis was at hand: “I had reference to a new note for the same sum which he gave me the day of the strike — and, come to think of it, it is due to-day. I gave him my check for the face of it less the month’s interest at six per cent.”

“No such check has been found,” said Dudley.

“How do you explain that, Mr. Carpenter?” persisted Myrtle.

“Why should I be asked to explain? He put it in his pocket just as the strikers were approaching. He had no chance to use it. If it is found, the matter can be arranged easily.”

“Come, Mr. Dudley,” said Myrtle. “We will look over father’s papers again, for this matter must be *arranged* at once. Excuse us for a short time, Mr. Carpenter.”

When John was alone, his thoughts were not pleasant

ones: "I'm in a tight box, with only one way out. I must back up what I've said." He walked the floor, excitedly: "I used the check for my own needs, and father can swear he never saw the money for that note. My check to Melton never will be found, for I never drew it. Now, how can I manage that second note?" He sat down by the table. Suddenly his eyes caught sight of the note book which Dudley had left behind him. He took a penknife from his pocket. Thinking that he might be observed he went to the hall door. There was no one there. He ran to the table, cut out a blank note from the back of the book, and held it in his hand.

"Mr. Carpenter."

John did not turn until he had placed the note in his letter-case. "What is it, Huldah?"

"Miss Myrtle says she will be here in about five minutes. I guess she's hunting for something. She's ransacking all the tables and desks in the house."

"Come in, Huldah."

"What for?"

"I want to speak to you."

"I ain't particularly desirous of speaking to you. I don't like you."

John laughed: "That's frank, anyway. I think you are to be envied."

Huldah stepped inside the door: "Why?"

"Because you are going to marry the man you love."

"Yes, and he's an overseer now, and can afford to support me in good style."

"Allow me to congratulate you."

"Thank you. But didn't you come here to marry the woman you love?"

"Why, no. What put that idea in your head? I came to buy goods." He thought it advisable to change the subject. "You are a very smart girl, Huldah, and deserve a wedding present. Let me hand you my gift in advance. Here are twenty dollars towards your *trousseau*."

Huldah took the bill between her thumb and forefinger. "Are there many poor families in New York?"

"Yes, thousands of them. Why do you ask?"

Huldah threw the bill at John. "You can give your money to them and say I sent it." She laughed and ran from the room.

"Confound her," exclaimed John. His private opinion was that Huldah was altogether too smart. He decided to write out the new note and be prepared. He had seen Richard Melton's handwriting so often that, in his mind's eye he could see it as plainly as if he had a copy before him. When completed it read: *One month after date, I promise to pay to the order of James Carpenter & Son Thirty Thousand Dollars, at any bank in New York.* John contemplated his handiwork. "That's regular. Now, for the signature, the important part of the document."

"Mr. Carpenter."

John started: "Yes, Huldah, yes." There was no response. He turned: "Oh, it's you, Miss Melton."

"Will you please step in the next room? Mr. Dudley wishes to go over your account with you." John rose and went towards her.

"If it is absolutely necessary, Miss Melton. I was busy figuring on goods. I suppose you will have some to consign before long." He did not think it advisable to

refer to that special contract. He could injure her father by so doing, but his own share in the compact was not creditable. "Our personal differences should not affect our business relations — should they, Miss Melton?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Carpenter, but I have decided to consign our goods in future to Fairfax & Co. They offer us prices which will enable us to pay better wages than we have done for a year, and I consider the prosperity of my employees as well as my own." Myrtle waiked towards the door; John followed her. Then he remembered that he had left the unsigned note on the table. No one would come in before his return. So, the agency for the great output of the Melton Mills was gone! He mentally resolved not to lose his hold so easily. — Miss Melton, and Dudley, would have to see that contract after all.

Tom Potter looked in: "Nobody here. Huldah said Mr. Dudley was here, and he's wanted at the mill." He walked around the room. "My bump of curiosity is rather big this morning." He leaned over the table. "Somebody's been writing. Looks like a check. Wonder if it is payable to Tom Potter." He examined the note. "'Taint a check — guess it's what they call a note. But 'taint worth nothing. There ain't any name on it. Whew! Thirty thousand dollars. Couldn't Huldah and me start housekeepin' in fine style on that? Gee! There's Carpenter's name in it. I'm suspicious of that chap. Any man that will try to steal kisses will hook money." Tom took up the note. "Little picture in the corner — dog on top of a safe. That means Tiger is on guard. I'll just imagine I'm Tiger and this piece of paper is in the safe. On guard, Tom Potter." He took a pin cushion

from his pocket. "I have it. That pin cushion was given to me by my future wife. When Huldy put it in my vest pocket, says she: 'Tom, now you must keep that full so when anybody wants a pin, you'll always have one handy.' " Tom took a pin from the cushion. "Stick a pin there, Tom Potter." He punctured the note. "I've put a pinhole in the dog's eye, and there's one in the lock to the safe. Now, if a judge should say to me — 'Thomas Potter, are there any marks by which you can identify that paper,' I should say, 'Tom Potter thinks he can.' " He put the note back on the table. "They must be awful busy 'bout somethin'. Guess I'll go and spend a few minutes with Huldy."

Tom had no sooner left the room than John came back. "Rejected, beaten, snubbed, and coldly bowed out. Pshaw! John Carpenter, where's your pluck?" He took up the pen. "Joe Maitland served ten years in prison. No matter, he's a prosperous merchant now, with an imitative son to succeed him." He began to write an "R." "Curse the pen! A big splatter! I'll take another note and do the business quietly at the hotel. The next time I come to this house I'll not leave it until I have good security for my money."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE — ON WITH THE NEW.

FRANK DUDLEY and Myrtle sat together in the library. For hours after John's departure they had been busy with account books and bills. As Frank closed the last book, which they had examined, he said: "There, Miss Melton, all your business affairs are in shape. Every bill is paid, or provided for, and all accounts made out for collection. You will be quite a 'rich young lady if everybody pays you in full."

"You forget the note that Mr. Carpenter says he holds."

"I shouldn't worry about that. Of course, he will grant you an extension."

"I'm afraid not." Dudley smiled.

"Why do you smile, Mr. Dudley?"

"Pardon me, but I was amused at the idea of your intended husband pressing you for the payment of a debt."

"I can claim no favors from Mr. Carpenter."

"What, Miss—"

"Mr. Carpenter and I—have parted."

"Parted? You astonish me. I thought he came to claim you."

"He did. But we have parted—not as friends—but with bitter words on both sides."

"Lovers often do that—they say."

"Lovers may—but when I came to look into my heart, I knew I never loved Mr. Carpenter as a wife should love her husband."

"And you are free?"

Myrtle saw a new expression in his eyes, and hers were promptly cast downward. "I should not have spoken so freely, Mr. Dudley, but I know and love your mother and sister so much that you seem like a —"

"Pray don't say *a brother*, Miss Melton."

Myrtle looked up, surprised. "Why not? Surely a brother —"

"Is a better name than I deserve — but, Miss Myrtle, my love for you" — again were Myrtle's eyes cast downward, and a warm flush came to the pale cheek — "is deeper and truer than that of a brother for a sister. I could stand by while you were promised to another, stifle the pain in my heart, and hide my love, because you knew him before you ever saw me. But now that you are free, I must leave here — at once."

"But why? I do not —"

"Because it would be more than I could bear to see another come and win you — after I had told you my hopeless love."

Myrtle looked up at him. He was young, and handsome. Tall, with a well-developed figure, an expressive face, with eyes that showed the love that his lips had spoken. At last she found words: "Why hopeless?"

"Can I believe my senses? Myrtle, dearest Myrtle, can it be possible that you have had one thought for me?" He took her hand. She became evasive.

"How could I help thinking of you, when your mother and sister praised you so much?"

Frank was not deceived by the womanly evasion: "And how could I help loving you when that same mother and sister told me so many times that you were the most lovely lady they ever knew?"

More feminine subterfuge: "But you must not go away. What will become of my business?"

Frank became an abettor: "Your husband can attend to that."

Myrtle spoke pleadingly: "But until I am married, you will stay."

Frank saw that the climax was near: "Yes, if our present contract is cancelled, and our new engagement made public. Do you consent, my Myrtle?"

He drew her to him and leaned over to kiss her — he was so tall, and she so petite.

"Hum!"

Like startled fawns, they looked up. "Oh, that's you, Potter."

Tom chuckled to himself: "They're at it, now, following our example. It's an awful catching complaint."

The factory bell rang out: "There's the bell, Miss Melton. I didn't know it was so late. The help are going in, and I must be at the mill. Have you come, Tom, to tell Miss Melton about the little surprise that has been arranged for her?"

"I'm a committee of one for that very purpose."

"Well, you go ahead and tell her your story. I am needed at the mill."

"Now, Mr. Potter, how are you going to surprise me?"

"This is your birthday, ain't it?"

"Yes, Tom, I was born twenty years ago to-day."

"So, you're really twenty?"

Myrtle laughed heartily. "Yes, Tom, I'm really twenty years old."

"Hum! I never knew before just how old you were. Huldy is nineteen, so she says, but she looks older than you do."

"Thank you for the compliment, Tom. Huldah is a nice young lady."

"Just what I think, and just what I've told her many a time."

"Is that your surprise for me? That's not new. Huldah told me some time ago about you."

"She did? Just like a woman. Told me to keep quiet, and made me promise on penalty of gettin' the mitten. But that ain't your surprise. The fact is, Miss Melton, the hands at the mill are feeling happy, and prospects look brighter. They know and 'preciate what you've done for 'em, and so they've had an address to you — that's what Bentwich calls it, he's English, you know,— written by one of the bookkeepers who slings ink in regular schoolmaster's style, and every man, woman and child has signed it — some of 'em, of course, had to put 'X' marks on, but the 'X's' kinder make it look ornamental — and we're going to have it framed in the city — it's there now,— and we want you to come down to the mill, and accept it — with a speech. That's why I'm tellin' yer now, so you can get up on the speech. We'd have come up here, but there's too many of us, and everybody wants to see you close to. Will you come?"

"Certainly, I will, with the greatest pleasure. When shall I come?"

"In about a week — we want to clean the mill up nice, and the carpenters are just finishing up where it was burnt. We'll give you a day's notice anyway."

Tom started for the door — then he came back. "I wasn't going to tell you who started this testimonial, but seein' what I've seen, and knowin' what I know, I guess it won't do no hurt to you or him."

"Him? Who's he?"

"Mr. Dudley. Well, I guess you ain't sorry, nor he
neither."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TESTIMONIAL.

MYRTLE found that work was the best antidote for the feeling of lonesomeness that overcame her after her father's death. He had never been a demonstrative man in the way of caresses, but in many ways she had seen his watchful care over her. Knowing his sure-to-be-fatal disease, he had wished her to have a protector, and John Carpenter seemed to have been sent providentially. Undemonstrative men and women are not apt to place a very high estimate on love as such. Worldly comfort calls for many accessories, and the man who can supply them is of more value than the one whose principal, and sometimes sole, capital is a fund of endearing epithets.

Mrs. Kersey was a fine housekeeper in that she did well what she was told to do; but she was not constructive, and Myrtle found herself obliged to plan for the great house, and take full responsibility. Then, little Elsie, while in many ways a great comfort was in others a great care. Mr. Dudley came every day from the mill on business, but Tom said there would have to be an assistant superintendent in the mill if Mr. Dudley was obliged to spend so much time at the house. This, of course, was said to Huldah only, for if Mr. Dudley had heard it, he might have retorted that one of the mill sections required an assistant overseer.

A rise in the market had come at the time of her father's death, and she had withdrawn the order for the cut-down.

All the old hands were at work, with the exception of Deming, who had not been seen since the night of the riot. Before making his escape he had shot at the soldiers, one of whom was wounded in the leg. The most serious injury was sustained by Hudson, one of the mill-hands, who was hit in the arm. He was known as the mill "hoodoo" for misfortunes had come to him thick and fast. Grandma Melton had made him and his family her special charge, and one morning she sought Myrtle in the library, being accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, the latter leading a sickly-looking little girl, and carrying a baby in her arms. Mr. Hudson was leaning on a staff, his left arm swathed and in a sling.

"Here is that poor man, Myrtle, that Deming shot when he ran away that night. This is Mr. Hudson and his wife, and little Mary, and the baby Richard. She named him after my boy."

"Have a chair, Mr. Hudson, and you Mrs. Hudson. Come and see me, Mary." But Mary clung, wide-eyed, to her mother's dress, and Myrtle's invitation was not accepted.

Grandma had not finished her story: "Mr. Hudson hasn't been able to do a stroke of work for a month, and three of the children have been sick, and the baby's only three months old —"

"Wait a moment, Grandma. I told Mr. Dudley this morning to pay Mr. Hudson in full what he would have earned if he had been at work."

"Bless you, ma'am," said Mrs. Hudson. "We can pay the doctor and the store bill, and with the present wages I shan't have to go to the mill but can stay home and look out for the children."

After her visitors had gone, Myrtle sat and pondered. How could employers of labor grind their help down knowing that many of them were in debt, others with sickness at home, large families to be provided for, and, perhaps, some dying for want of proper clothing, food, or care? What did present comfort or affluence amount to compared with the inward satisfaction of having contributed to the happiness of others? Why had men, and women too, made Money their God instead of that "still small voice within them," Conscience. No men, or women, who have not subjected their consciences to the domination of Money — meaning the greed for it — can be unjust to their employees, without knowing it is wrong, and having a desire to remedy bad conditions. Myrtle was learning her lesson. Religion had not brought about the long-heralded but slow-to-arrive "brotherhood of man." As Cousin Charlie had told her: "When that ever-present moral God — Conscience — is placed on the topmost pedestal, then we may look for the lion and the lamb — the millionaire and the man, drinking their respective fills from the argentiferous stream that comes from the combination of rivers of wealth and mountains of work."

The next day—a week had passed since Tom had disclosed the secret of "The Testimonial"—Mr. Dudley came earlier than usual. Their meeting was lover-like, but not long continued. Frank did not yet fully realize the extent of his future happiness, and took rather timidly those favors that the placing of the engagement ring make proper and allowable. In other words, he nibbled at love's riches instead of swallowing them at once.

"To-day is your fête day, Myrtle. The testimonial

has come from the city and the operatives are in a fever of excitement to see you. I came early, because the committee to escort you to the mill will soon be here."

"What shall I wear, Frank?"

"White, by all means, and I will get you some June roses from the garden."

Mr. Potter, Mr. Bentwich and Mr. Gulson formed the committee of invitation. They, including Tom, were formally introduced by Mr. Dudley.

"I am pleased to meet you, gentlemen," said Myrtle.

Tom became spokesman: "They won't be ready for half an hour yet as everybody is fixing up so as to look clean and neat. The machinery shines like a glass bottle."

While Myrtle was dressing with Huldah's assistance, Frank picked the roses which were to be her only adornment. He took Bentwich and Gulson with him to show them the beauties and personal luxuries of the estate. These were commented upon freely by Mr. Bentwich. "It must keep anybody busy to look after all these things. I ain't envious. I'm satisfied with my little cottage now that the roof's been fixed, and I've got that bit of garden. My wife has been home since we started up, and I've spent every evening with her and the children. She used to be so tired that she went to bed as soon as supper was cleared away."

"Just like my daughter," said Mr. Gulson. "She's a woman grown, and looks after my house — my wife being dead. She's out of the mill, too, and is growing plump and rosy once more."

They returned to the library where Myrtle soon joined them. Frank had sent the roses to her by Huldah who had escaped from the boudoir as soon as possible to entertain lonesome Mr. Potter.

"Mr. Potter," said Myrtle, "here is a letter that I found among my father's papers — it is addressed to you."

"Read it aloud, Mr. Potter," said Frank, "unless it's private."

Tom read it hastily; it was short, and contained an inclosure. Huldah endeavored to catch a glimpse of its contents, but Tom guarded them effectively.

Tom's eyes were misty. "Will you please read it, Miss Myrtle? I've got a big lump in my throat."

Myrtle complied:

"Meltonville, June 2, 19—.

Dear Mr. Potter,

As a slight return for your fortunate services last night, please accept the inclosed check for five hundred dollars. It may be of use when you are married.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD MELTON."

"But, Miss Myrtle," cried Tom, "Mr. Dudley ought to have this. He did the work."

"I will reward Mr. Dudley myself, Mr. Potter."

Frank said quickly: "Mr. Dudley wishes no reward — other than he now possesses."

Tom passed the letter and check to Huldah, at the same time whispering in her ear: "I guess not, Huldah. I seen 'em."

When Myrtle, Mr. Dudley, and the committee reached the mill, the operatives were drawn up in line ready to receive them. They were greeted with cheers. The presentation of "The Testimonial" was made by Mr. Bentwich, who closed his speech by calling for three cheers for Miss Melton — "Our Employer and Friend!"

They were given over and over again. Then Myrtle responded, using in her remarks many ideas that she had heard for the first time in her talks with Cousin Charlie.

More cheers followed, and many came forward to shake hands, among them Pierre Gagnon. Myrtle took a rose from her bouquet and gave it to him. "*Mille remerciements, Ma'amselle. Je suis heureux, maintenant.*"

There were loud cries from the children: "Give me a flower," and Myrtle threw her bouquet to them. A lively scramble ensued for the possession of a memento. It was the duty of the committee to escort Myrtle to her home. As they left the mill, the greatest surprise of all was given her. The Fairville Brass Band had been engaged, and it led the procession homeward. Thus ended an ever-to-be-remembered day in the history of Meltonville. It was the inauguration of the era of good feeling between Capital and Labor — between Myrtle and the men, women and children who respected her — and loved her.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LONG TALK WITH JOSHUA.

WHEN Cousin Charlie came back from the city and learned of the death of his Cousin Richard, he was able to return to some extent, the many kindnesses that Myrtle had shown him. In the house of death there are a multitude of things to be done which the saddened heart hesitates to undertake. It is then that genuine sympathy and absolute clearheadedness bring order out of chaos, and a sense of comfort in the midst of affliction.

Cousin Charlie had the sympathy, the clear head, and the executive faculty developed by thirty-four years' use. When all was over, and the household had resumed its usual quiet, he expressed his intention of packing up his books and papers and returning to the city, but Myrtle would not listen to such a proposition."

"You came here to write your book, and I wish you to finish it here; besides, I want you to read it to me when it is done." So he went back to his table, writing early in the morning and late at night, the afternoon being devoted to reading and other forms of relaxation.

Old Joshua Melton missed his son very much. Having started the business, Richard's account of life at the mill, had always been interesting to him. Now that he was deprived of it, he looked for a substitute, for, despite his eighty odd years, he was in perfect health, and enjoyed the consideration and discussion of public matters. To be sure, no times could be as good as the old ones, and he

looked for their return, when the master and the man would have a common interest in good work, as they did when he was a young man.

Joshua soon became a regular visitor at Cousin Charlie's den, and, as the subjects considered were in line with the book upon which he was engaged, Cousin Charlie looked forward to the conversations as "instigators" of new ideas, or the manner of expressing them. A chance allusion would often provoke a long debate. One day Joshua said: "Clams and oysters ain't so good as they used to be."

"And for good reasons," was the reply.

"One of my last official duties was to have our entire coast line examined to see if our flats were being properly used for the propagation of bivalves. In the majority of cases little, if anything, had been done. Many flats were contaminated by sewage. In the case of those developed, the suicidal plan was followed of cleaning them off entirely, instead of cleaning half on alternate years, allowing for a longer growth. Had I been retained in office, I should have presented a bill to provide for supervision, and development, and the abrogation of certain vested rights the owners of which do nothing to increase production, and prevent others from using what is of no use to themselves."

"It's the same way with our forests," said Joshua.

"Even more so, Mr. Melton. Fire and the pulp mill are the greatest foes of our woodland. Until I took the last census, no one in the State could learn from official sources the kinds of wood grown in the different towns. I obtained this information and enabled the State Forester to construct a Forestry Map."

“Do you think men work as hard now as they used to?” was one of Joshua’s questions.

“In some respects, no; in others, yes, even harder. When you were a boy, Mr. Melton, you thought out your work before you did it. One of the greatest, I will say the greatest pleasure found in work, is seeing the completed article as good as, or even better, than the plan. The cobbler, who can make a boot or shoe, takes pride in the completed product, but what personal gratification can come to the modern operative who does one of more than a hundred different processes required to turn out the present day boot or shoe? Machinery increases product, but reduces mentality, thus causing the *monotony of labor*. This makes toil irksome and leads to demands for less hours, and no one wishes, for any reason, to have his pay cut down, after he has climbed to a certain financial altitude.

“I had long contemplated a scientific investigation of the question of ‘A Day’s Work.’ My idea was to select some twenty or thirty occupations, find a competent workman in each line, and determine scientifically the amount of mentality and physical energy used or expended in a day. My agent was to leave the man’s home with him in the morning and remain with him until he reached home at night. His physical and mental condition could then be compared with his condition in the morning. Mr. George E. McNeill, the labor advocate, was greatly interested in this proposed investigation, and but for his sudden death would have been engaged for a part of the work.”

“I don’t think our working men are as well off as they were fifty years ago, do you?” asked Joshua.

“I must answer as I did before, *no* and *yes*. When you were young, men did all the outside work, and women kept the home. Even if wages were not so high, prices were lower, and the husband's wages enabled him to care for his wife and children. Can the workingman to-day, by his individual earnings, keep up to the present standard of living? Emphatically, No! He could not so far back as 1875, when an investigation of which I wrote the report, showed conclusively that it was the *family earnings* that provided the extra comforts and even luxuries unknown to the workingman when you were a young man. Thirty-two years, nearly a generation, had passed, and I proposed an exhaustive investigation in order to learn whether the workingman, judged by his individual earnings, had advanced or retrograded. The Legislature would not appropriate the money. I asked a member why, and he said ‘one party was afraid and the other *dassent*.’ Here is where politics came in. If the workingman's condition was improved, one party would claim the credit; if he had fallen behind, the *ins* would be held responsible, and the *outs* would call for a change. One member of the legislature asked me what the investigation would prove. I told him that if I knew there would be no need of spending the money. Then he said: ‘*Couldn't you fix it?*’ I could see only one way to fix it to suit him, and that would have been to throw out all the reports that showed that the workingman had fallen behind, and use only those which indicated that his condition had improved. Those would have been political statistics prepared to uphold the *ins*. I had always regarded my oath as made to serve the whole people, and not a political party, and I told him that *all* the reports would be published whatever the result

was shown to be. How much this declaration worked to bring about my dismissal from office, the *ins* know better than I."

"Don't you think we've too many foreigners here?" was the next query.

"Not, if they come to stay, and wish to become Americans in spirit. It is a surprising fact that although our population increased more than half-a-million in ten years, the proportions in the different industries varied but a trifle. I mean, with the added population, there were virtually the same percentages of persons engaged in agriculture, and trade, and transportation, and manufactures, as there were ten years before. This shows the assimilation of the newcomers into our industrial life, and so long as this continues, other conditions being satisfactory, there is room for more from foreign lands."

"How long does it take to make 'em into good Americans?" asked Joshua as he emptied his pipe and proceeded to refill it.

"I started an investigation just before I was deposed, to ascertain that very point. I called the second generation '*The Composite American*.' I knew that the children of fathers and mothers of the same nationality would be more clannish, and become assimilated less quickly than if the parents were of different nationalities; so I confined my investigation to such combinations as an English father and a French mother; a French-Canadian father and an Irish mother; a German father and a Swedish mother; an Irish father and an Italian mother; and those similar. Photographs were taken so as to show the perpetuation, combination, or gradual obliteration of national physical peculiarities."

"Do you think the American mothers are wholly to blame for the decrease in the birth rate?"

"Not at all, Mr. Melton. The newly-arrived foreign born, with what may be called ready-made families, have more children, but they lose more by accident, poor environment and nutrition, or disease. A United States Government office divided the number of children in this State under five years of age, by the number of women from fifteen to forty-five years of age, and put us nearly at the bottom of the list as a child-bearing State. Our own official statistics show that the average age at marriage of our young women is twenty-four, and comparatively few women bear children after they reach the age of thirty-eight, so you see that with such an unreasonable, unscientific divisor, a small quotient was obtained that cast an undeserved and unsupported stigma upon our State. Our own official figures show that the children of immigrants are no more in favor of large families than are the scions of our so-called native stock."

Joshua was an indefatigable listener, and when one inquiry was answered was ready with another.

"Is poverty the mother of vice, or the other way 'round?"

"Perhaps I can best answer that question by reading an extract from a newspaper. The writer is a friend of mine. He says:

The sentiment is found in the Bible — "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." But so many preachers never preach from the text. Oh, no; they incline, nowadays, to preach that the poverty of the poor is the result of the vices of the poor, their gluttony, drunkenness, carelessness, when the fact is that poverty is the cause of a thousand vices where vice is the cause of one case of poverty. The poor are made poor by the laws of privilege that favor the aggregation of public wealth in private hands, and by confirming to the few the accretion of wealth due to the creation of values by community activity.

"He means by that, Mr. Melton, that many of our

rich men are made so by their environment. A great city grows up and they profit by the increased trade that comes to them. My friend goes on:

The poor remain poor because they can't grab this privilege or buy that cinch. They can't raise their wages, but the men on top can lower them. . . . The poor are poor because in every country under the Sun a few people have pre-empted, engrossed, and forestalled the natural wealth of the land by force of arms, by royal grant, by enactment of privilege.

"What, do you think it is wrong for a man to make money?" asked Joshua, evidently astonished at what had been read to him.

"My friend says, and I agree with him, that great wealth cannot be accumulated without smashing the finer ethics. There is a difference between making money legally and making it honestly. The conflict is on between *Labor*, meaning honest work in all lines of endeavor, and *The Money-God*, meaning the inordinate and unnecessary accumulation of wealth, not for reasonable, or even extravagant personal needs, but as a symbol of power — of ability to crush those beneath — to sway the market for personal gain even though it means the ruin of thousands — to buy political preferment so that vested rights and legalized privileges may be retained indefinitely, despite the burdens of the common people. That is what my friend means by 'smashing the finer ethics.' If part of the money expended for the militia could be diverted for one year and devoted to ascertaining the exact condition of its working men, women, and children, an advance in social progress would be suggested that would be an object lesson to the nations of the world. Our public men, as a rule, deal in platitudes, in 'glittering generalities.' If a public official seeks to go below the surface and expose the real condition of affairs, he is accused of extravagance

—magic watchword! and is deposed. But the 'old guard' cannot blot out what he has accomplished, nor can it fail to follow the track he has blazed, without showing that its opposition to him was not the spending of money, but the spending of it for a purpose which it did not approve — which is a distinction with a marked difference. And now, Mr. Melton, as it is near supper time, I will, to conclude our discussion, or rather consideration of public matters, read what was said at Chautauqua about *The Money God*."

The power of money over men is almost without limit. A man that has it can buy a beautiful woman, straight out; yes, he can buy two, three; I know not how many he can buy. Or it may be turned about: The woman may have the money, and she can buy a man next to the king, his grace the gartered duke, as she would a bit of blue ribbon over the counter. She can buy him as she would a pound of tea. Or she can buy a lord and get into society, or a whole shoal of dapper counts and seedy barons.

"That is a hit at those girls that marry foreigners," said Joshua with a laugh.

"Yes, but remember that the millions that go to build up impoverished estates in foreign countries are so much taken from our capital, and can never be won back, even in part, by the hands that created this wealth — by *Labor*."

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT WAS IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

"I WISH I could help you, Cousin Charlie," said Myrtle one morning as she sat in the "den."

"Do you really want to work?" he asked.

The blue eyes opened wide: "Don't you think I am sincere?"

"I never saw a young lady more so. The form of my question was inappropriate, I confess, but my excuse is that I was thinking more of the disagreeable nature of the task than your evident desire to undertake it."

"What makes it disagreeable?"

"The injustice of it all. I have served the State for thirty-four years. During that time all my ambition, all my energies, all the inventive and constructive powers with which Nature favored me, have been enlisted in the behalf of my native State. I served under others for thirty years and worked as earnestly for their interests as I would have for my own. Before and after work-day hours, on holidays, and, when exigency required, on Sundays, the aim of my life has been to increase the influence of the office which was a weak infant when I entered it, and which, when I was cast out of it by a political conspiracy, was a full-grown man, made so, I can say without egotism, by my invention and application of the principles of practical statistics.

"There is a general impression in regard to statistics which is entirely wrong. The analyses, or application of

statistical results to modern industrial and sociological questions, are considered the most important part of statistical investigation. But what if the well-spring is poisoned? What if the person in charge of the tabulation omits from consideration those schedules which conflict with his opinions or those of his superior officers? Suppose, for instance, that he is investigating the condition of workingmen, and that the political party to which he and his superior officer belong maintains the opinion, it may be honest or otherwise, that the workingmen are much better off than they were a generation ago. How easy for him to reject many of those returns showing poor conditions and use freely those indicating advancement.

"The changes of a few figures, called 'editing', may convert adverse conditions into prosperous ones. No head of a department grasps all the minute details of the office work. Of what value are the analyses founded upon 'doctored' statistics? How absolutely necessary it is that the honesty of the tabulator should be above suspicion. The president of a bank may certify as to the assets and liabilities of the institution of which he is the head, but what if his cashier is a defaulter, and the balance sheet placed before the president is full of false statements?

"Then again the construction placed upon certain statistical tables by the head of the office, often is not accepted by reviewers and sociologists, who draw a different lesson therefrom. This is all very dry and uninteresting, is it not, Myrtle?"

"Not at all. I understand you perfectly. There must be honesty from the beginning, and the honest statistician is not influenced by his personal opinions or the demands of a political party."

“Spoken like a judge, Myrtle. He may be a judge, never an advocate. I have been asked to prepare statistics supporting a certain contention. I have always replied that I would give both sides of the case, and those who asked for them could use such parts as they saw fit. I was not responsible for their honesty in dealing with the people, nor could I, as a State official, fly into print and declare that they had presented only the weaker side of the argument, but, of course, the one which served best their personal or political interests. But to return to our work in hand. The reason it is disagreeable is because although I have served the State to the best of my ability, my work is not appreciated, and I am attacked as though I had been a grafter, and had used my office for my personal aggrandizement. This is untrue, but how can a solitary individual meet such charges when they are sent out with apparent official approval by one high in authority, although a higher official declares there is no stigma of dishonor or dishonesty upon me?”

“And have you no redress?”

“My argument before my opponents was ignored. I showed that I had saved the State sixty thousand dollars during the four years I had been head of the office, and that the use of my patented and copyrighted devices had saved the State more than it had paid me in salary for my thirty-four years’ service. One way in which I can hope for a vindication is to appeal to the courts, but then I should have to fight single-handed against combined wealth and political power.”

“But can you not appeal directly to the people?”

“That is what I am doing in the book I am writing, Do you see this pile of newspapers and clippings? There

must have been a thousand or more articles printed concerning the charges made against me, and about my dismissal. Some, regarded personally, are *pro* and some are *con*. If you are willing to undertake the task, it will help me greatly, if you will read them, and separate the appreciative from those which are the reverse. While you are doing this I can be working on the next chapter."

"I will do it willingly, Cousin Charlie, although I shall be tempted to throw those that speak ill of you into the waste-basket."

"Don't do that. An honest statistician presents both sides of the case, and an honest man does the same."

Several days passed before Myrtle presented herself at the "den", her arms full of papers: "I have done my best, Cousin Charlie, but I may have made mistakes on the *pros* and *cons*. The *cons* all say the same thing, but the *pros* take a wider range and are much more interesting."

"I trust you have not been prejudiced in my favor."

"Oh, no. I have tried to be a judge and not an advocate. If all they say against you is true, Cousin Charlie, you must be a very bad man in some respects; but if all they say in your favor is true, you have been treated in a very unjust and mean manner."

"What do they say against me, Myrtle? I will consider myself on trial."

Myrtle looked over the newspapers and slips: "I can't put them in any cumulative order, so I will take them up just as they come. Did you appoint a number of your relatives to office?"

"In the whole thirty-four years there were just two:

one was appointed by a predecessor as a medical expert, the other by me as a laborer. He was an honest and trustworthy man."

"They say that you had persons help you on your novels, and that they were paid for such service by the State."

"As I have stated in print, this accusation is a lie, and a libel. Not an hour's work was ever done on my literary work by assistants that was not paid for out of my own pocket."

"They say you made money out of machines sold to the State."

"I never sold the State a machine or anything else. They were ordered from the makers who received the pay for them — being the cost of manufacture. While in office, I gave the State the free use of my patented machines and copyrighted devices. Now that I have sold them all, the State, if it wishes to use them, must deal with the present owners."

"But doesn't it seem contemptible, Cousin Charlie, that after profiting by your inventions for so many years, that the State should dismiss you from office for *extravagance?*"

"There was no extravagance. While at the head of the office I approved bills for services and supplies representing nearly half-a-million dollars. No complaint was ever made. With such an ample field for extravagance in spending half-a-million why should I wait to indulge that propensity in disposing of a beggarly twenty-five thousand?"

"Why, did it cost so much to get places at the Free Employment Office?"

"It didn't. Two amateur statisticians bungled the figures and it suited the purpose of my opponents to believe them. Let me show you the truth of the matter. To open such an office required furniture, fixtures, signs, supplies, and advertising, in the same manner that a manufacturer establishes what he calls his plant. To learn the cost of his goods does he add in the cost of his plant? That is what the amateurs did; and they did worse. To register an applicant, counting in the cost of the plant, caused an outlay of thirty-seven cents; to send him to a place, thirty-nine cents. Employers to whom applicants were sent were asked to fill out and send back a card stating whether the applicant was given a place or not. About one-quarter of them did so. Now, it seems plain to me that if a man was registered, sent to an employer, and was given a situation, the cost to the State for the service rendered him was but thirty-nine cents. If twenty-four thousand persons were sent to places and only six thousand cards came back, it is obviously unfair to charge against the six thousand not only what it cost to register and send them out but also the cost of registering and sending out eighteen thousand for whom no cards were received. The one dollar and eighty-nine cents stated by the committee as the cost of securing places was a statistical untruth, a plain fallacy. The actual cost for obtaining situation for applicants at the Free Employment Office while it was under my direction did not exceed forty-seven cents, and I am prepared to maintain and prove this assertion before any body of unprejudiced, non-political, judges, or before a jury in a court of law. This is my answer to all the statements, arguments or deductions of my opponents. It disproves

completely the charges of extravagance, and shows, conclusively, that I was removed for political reasons, and for those only, the alleged extravagance being made use of as an excuse — a subterfuge!"

"Some of the papers say that you did not give your full time to your official duties."

"That statement can be easily disproved. My best witnesses would be the clerks under my charge who found me there on their arrival and left me there when they went home. I never went to Europe and left my chief clerk in charge for three months at a time. I was never kept from my duties for months on account of sickness. I never held a position under the United States Government, drawing two salaries, and throwing my duties upon my subordinates. All my time taken for relaxation, or lost from sickness, would not amount to ten months in thirty-four years, but I was denied a month's notice at the end of my long service. I consider the State my debtor, and not a creditor."

"They say you were too imaginative, and that affected the value of your statistics. That novel writing and statistics were not compatible."

"When I was appointed to the head of the office I determined to be an *investigator*. To go below the conventional surface, and give the public something to think about. My 'fad' about old-age pensions has been adopted, and the Chief Executive has appointed a Commission. My 'fad' about Industrial Opportunities not yet utilized has led to the creation of an Industrial Commission. Since the office was organized there have never been so many complimentary letters received regarding the statistics furnished as during the four years of my incumbency.

There seem to be many persons who cannot comprehend versatility. They run in ruts, and they cannot conceive of a man working on two lines of endeavor at once. Then, they do not remember that I have always been lame, and am obliged to take my relaxation in sedentary lines instead of physical. If I had been a champion golf player, or an automobile expert, I presume those pursuits and statistics would have been considered perfectly compatible."

"One paper says that much of the material given in your reports had appeared in the papers weeks and months before."

"Only in one department called Current Comment. Newspapers do not always agree in their views of certain subjects. Besides very few people can afford to take *all* the newspapers and magazines, and the object of *Current Comment* was to bring before the reader these varying views. A newspaper that sees only one side of a subject would not be likely to appreciate an expression of divergent views, but the general public did. Besides we printed in each number translations from foreign reports and periodicals which but few papers copied for the information of their readers."

"They say you refused to give information in your possession to other State departments."

"Yes, unless authorized to do so by the legislature. By law, the census returns were made confidential. I referred the matter to the Attorney-General and he sustained my interpretation of the law."

"One paper says that your statistics of the average number of children borne by living mothers were absolutely worthless."

"My figures were based upon returns made by the mothers themselves. A clerk of twenty years' experience in statistical work superintended the tabulation, the scheme of which I blocked out. The other gentleman is entitled to his guess, for it can have no higher authority."

"Your reports are said to have been profuse."

"No longer than in previous years with the exception of the *Bulletin* which was changed to a monthly after its proposed contents had been explained to the financial committee and been approved by them."

"Many complaints are made about the results of the census."

"They always are made. No census ever agrees with the estimates of local optimists. In all the cities the enumerators were selected by the Mayor and Aldermen, and it is to be presumed they chose the best men and women available. In a certain city the letter carriers wanted more pay, which a larger population would have given them. The postmaster had his carriers take a census which showed increases. A new census was requested. I asked the postmaster if his men were sworn in, and he answered *No!* I asked him if he would make oath that the carriers' census was correct and he, again, said *No!* I called the enumerators together, showed them the carriers' reports, and they all declared their own count to be the correct one. I, then, refused to take the census over again. When the legislature convened, a bill was put in to authorize this city to take a special census. I called the committee's attention to the fact that there was an existing law putting all special censuses under the jurisdiction of my office. Asked what the office expense would be, I estimated four hundred dollars, and I saw no

reason to change that estimate until a report came from the Inspector that the work could not be done for the sum estimated. I went to the city in question, saw the Mayor's representative and he, in the presence of two witnesses now living, told me to go on with the work and that the necessary amount to finish the work would be paid. He afterwards denied giving such authorization, and the city officials voted to ask the State to return the sum in excess of four hundred dollars, but at the last moment their courage failed them and the bill was withdrawn, and a graft prevented.

"An enumerator, whose work was of no value, I refused to pay. The Attorney-General ruled that he must be paid because he had worked, and the only legal way in which an incompetent man can be disposed of is by discharge. As an enumerator does not turn in his work until he has finished his district there is no way of establishing his incompetency until his work is examined. I approved his account under protest. He then tried to collect more money because he had been *suspended* only, but not fully *discharged*, but this attempt at graft failed. I saved the State more than one thousand five hundred dollars by refusing to pay unauthorized expenses. I presume each man, whose account was so reduced, became an unseen enemy. I think, however, I have a few things to my credit. In my appointments I never asked what political party an applicant belonged to, but I was told by high authority that a man belonging to a certain party, whose ability was unquestioned, could not be appointed by me on account of his politics. I have never made use of a religious or race test. Catholics, Jews, Irish, Poles, and Russians have been appointed and promoted on their

merits. Of seven heads of divisions, four were of Irish descent, and Catholics in religion. The first colored woman employed in a State department was in my office, and when the white clerks said they would resign if she remained, they were told to go — but they didn't. Up to the time I was made head of the department no trade unionist, with one exception, had ever been given employment. I requested the Civil Service Commissioners to certify me the names of six persons acquainted with the condition and needs of the working classes. They had no eligible list and I was authorized to make provisional appointments. I did so, and in this way organized labor was recognized for the first time. It has now become quite the fashion to appoint them, principally on unpaid commissions, and let me say here that I assume full responsibility for all the articles favorable to the workingman which appeared in my reports. Not one of them was suggested by trade unionists with the possible exception of an investigation relating to the licensing of barbers. The office has been a clerical and statistical school. Out of fully seven hundred persons who have held, at various times, clerical positions therein, at least one hundred and fifty are now occupying advanced positions in other offices of the City or State."

"But the *pros* say more in your favor than the *cons* against you."

"I appreciate all kind words said of me, and the loyal efforts of all my friends, but I am sure that my strongest support must be based upon successfully refuting the charges made by my accusers."

"But, Cousin Charlie, won't you listen to a few of the things said in your favor?"

—
“Nothing could give me greater pleasure.”

Myrtle was anxious to read: “I think this one is perfectly awful. I can’t imagine a great man doing such a thing. Hear what it says: ‘Less than a month ago the Chief Executive told a member of the Legislature that he wished to know how to get rid of Chief Melton as he caused more trouble than all the departments together. If the Chief Executive sends in the name of Chief Melton again this week it will be nothing more than a political grand-stand play, as no such chances would be taken were the Chief Executive not convinced that the council will once more turn the name down?’ Could such a thing be possible, Cousin Charlie?”

“The writer evidently thought so.”

“There are many papers that thought so, too, but they express it in a different way. One says you were dismissed for alleged extravagance ‘but there is every reason to believe that there is something more below the surface.’”

“There was, as I have shown you — politics.”

“One of the councillors made a big speech in your favor.”

“Yes, and I appreciate his support highly. But did you notice that the President of the Council and a member both said if the speech had been made two weeks before it might have changed their votes. But why? During those two weeks no additions had been made to the original charges, and no further investigation had been made.”

“Cousin Charlie, isn’t this just fine? ‘And there is the distinctly practical character of the inquiries and the reports of the office under Chief Melton’s direction. His statistics have not been barren or colorless. The facts

and figures presented have been remarkably illuminating on the matters of workingmen's wages, hours of labor, contracts with employers, cost of living and of the necessities of life. There can be no possible criticism of this feature. In fact, many of the special investigations have been undertaken by direction of the Legislature, and if the office is not maintained for such work, what is it for?"

"That was a Democratic' paper. Can you find the same kind of an opinion in a Republican paper?"

"I don't know one kind from another."

"But I do. And you will find no such commendation of my services in any Republican paper. And what does that prove? Plainly this: that when a life-long Republican is deposed from office by the action of members of his own party, when those who vote against him disclaim any personal feeling, when the Chief Executive himself acquits him of any suspicion of dishonor, or dishonesty, there is but one solution: his conduct of the office was not in accord with the political principles of the dominant party, and for that reason public policy, from its standpoint, required a change. But would it not have been more honest and honorable to have told me so, and request my resignation, than to trump up so flimsy a charge as extravagance? Time and events will answer this question."

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW IT WAS DONE.

"I CAN'T understand it, Cousin Charlie."

"It must be a very hard subject, then. What is it, my dear?"

"I can't see how you were turned out. It looks like a plot."

"Perhaps they thought I was not a good party man. One of them asked me how I voted. I said I had no objection to telling him. He waited anxiously for my answer — and I informed him that I voted the Australian ballot."

"What is that?"

"It is a secret ballot. No one knows for whom you vote. It prevents intimidation, the buying and delivery of purchased votes, and thus preserves, to a degree, the purity of the ballot; on the other hand, a man may profess party fealty, and at the polls vote for the other side without fear of detection; in this way it fosters political hypocrisy."

"But how did the Chief Executive, the President of the Council, and the councillors carry out the plot?"

"I have been made the victim of circumstances, and those circumstances were honest endeavors on my part to live up to my oath of office, and 'save the Commonwealth' all I could. Certain persons were aggrieved because I did not appoint their friends or political helpers to office. When I refused to pay unauthorized expenses,

I, undoubtedly, made more enemies. I was told by politicians that I *must* appoint this or that man. My reply probably made an enemy, for I said that while I was a very easy man to coax I was a very hard one to boss.

"Certain persons wished private information from the census schedules. I explained that their contents were confidential and that I could not supply it. In several instances I was threatened with summonses to court, but I declared I would not comply unless authorized by the legislature. More enemies, I suppose."

"It must have been an uncomfortable life."

"It had its drawbacks. A reporter asked me whose duty it was to enforce the Child Labor Law. I told him the District Police and the School Committees'. The next morning his paper contained in monster black letters the statement that I accused the District Police and School Committees of neglecting their duty. Explanations, and probably more enemies, or lukewarm friends.

"Another reporter asked for statistics relating to prices of the necessities of life, and the cost of living. I gave him all our reports bearing upon these subjects. The next day an article appeared containing the reporter's ideas, but he credited them all to me, although I had expressed no opinions on the subjects."

"Did you deny them?"

"Of what use? A denial has leaden wings, and never overtakes the original statement. I explained matters to the Chief Executive, and he said he had similar experiences. I asked him if anything in my department seemed to be wrong to send for me, and he said he would. I left him with the understanding that if I did not hear from him I should consider that affairs were satisfactory."

“Had you personal enemies?”

“Not that I knew of, until one disclosed himself, or, rather, was found out. After the Free Employment Office was started, the newspapers, as a rule, treated it favorably. One paper, however, was very bitter against it, calling me and my assistants grafters. I found out that the articles emanated from a ‘State House reporter,’ as they are called. A former special agent of the office, whose services were unsatisfactory, was found to be in constant communication with this reporter. I accused him of instigating the articles and he did not deny. In fact, he gave me to understand that they would be kept up until I gave him a job.”

“That was blackmail, was it not?”

“Very near it. I told him I would never give him work in response to such attacks. If he considered that his work had not been fairly judged, I would give him another chance, which I did. His work was carefully examined, found unsatisfactory, and he was discharged! Now, watch the sequel: Another employee of the office was on speaking terms with him, and to him the discharged agent unburdened himself. The employee thought I should know what the discharged agent said about me and his work, so he came and told me. I requested him to put his statement in the form of an affidavit, and make oath to it, which he did.”

Cousin Charlie looked through a package of neatly-folded and filed papers and extracted one. “Here it is. I will read it, using fictitious names.”

I, John Doe, of the City of ,
County of....., State of.....,
being duly sworn, depose and say that I know Richard Roe; that I have
had personal conversations with him at various times, during which he

made the statement that he did not believe that the Chief of theknew enough to be the Chief; that he was incompetent to transact the duties of his office, and that the same incompetence covered the positions of the Chief Clerk and the Second Clerk; that while he was at work gathering Retail Prices, he did not believe that the figures he obtained, or any agent obtained, were of any value, and furthermore, that he knew his were of no value; that when he was at work on the collection of Agriculture statistics, he knew that his schedules were of no value, and he also knew that the schedules obtained by other agents were of no value.

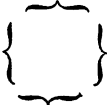
When he made these statements to me he was then employed by the office in obtaining information in regard to Retail Prices. Upon my asking him why he made such statements when he was employed by the office, he remarked that that was all right, that the office had to employ him in order to keep his mouth shut, or words to that effect.

(Signed) JOHN DOE.

Personally appeared before me, William Smith, a notary public for the County of, State of the above named John Doe, to me personally known, and made oath that the above statement is true and correct to the best of his knowledge and belief.

WILLIAM SMITH,
Notary Public.

Notarial



Sea'.

"Will he be prosecuted, Cousin Charlie?"

"That is not decided yet. The matter has been brought to the attention of the Attorney-General. If he fails to take action, the District-Attorney will be informed. Mr. Doe, under the law, is liable to a fine of two thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year, for wilful neglect in the discharge of his duties. We threw out his returns, so far as they could not be verified."

"Oh, I forgot yesterday to say that one of the charges was that your pay-rolls were padded."

"If they were, the onus falls on my chief clerk and second clerk, who kept the time account, and prepared

the pay-rolls. I simply approved what they assured me was correct. I have implicit confidence that they never asked me to approve bills for services or supplies, unless the service was rendered, and the goods furnished. I know of a case, however, where a person was paid one hundred and fifty dollars for services that he never rendered. I tried to get him to turn in his article, but he said it was none of my business, and that he would send it to the one who ordered it."

"Has he ever done it?"

"I will inquire some day. The man is living, and it is not too late for him to make restitution. He is an enemy of mine. When I was deposed, he sent me an uncomplimentary notice, anonymously, but his handwriting and the postmark disclosed his identity."

"We have wandered away from the general subject, Cousin Charlie."

"Yes, I know, but details are needed to sustain general statements. We next come to the Free Employment Office. I drew the bill that became a law. I looked upon it as a labor measure, but its strongest advocate was a Republican politician who had followed up the matter for years, and whom I appointed superintendent with the approval of the Chief Executive. I felt that organized labor should be represented in such an office, and I appointed a trade unionist as clerk, with the approval of the President of the Council, who, at that time, was acting as Chief Executive. So you see, my subordinates had good backers. My Second Clerk, the prospective superintendent, and myself, visited a score or more of places in search of a site. One was selected at a rental of three thousand dollars, which, considering the space and location,

was lower than any offer we had received. Many agents refused to let us rooms when they learned that they were to be used as an employment agency, saying that their other tenants objected. The State became a tenant-at-will for four months, it being understood that a lease would require approval by the Chief Executive and Council. When the lease was sent to me I forwarded it to the Chief Executive, but made no effort to have it approved. The lessors wished five thousand dollars for the rooms and an annex, but finally agreed to let the State have them for three thousand five hundred dollars a year. The five-hundred-dollar room has been given up, since my dismissal, but was immediately let for one thousand two hundred dollars, so, I did not make such a bad trade. The rooms were furnished substantially, but economically. I loaned the State personal property valued at eight hundred dollars, and the State had the use of it for nearly eight months, free of expense."

"And yet they refused you a month's vacation?"

"There was not an article sent there, or a clerk supplied, except on the request in writing of the superintendent or clerk. The office was opened in December. In the February following I called for a reduction in expenses which was made. On May 1, I called for another reduction to take effect May 15. As this reduction took place after my nomination, it has been erroneously claimed, that I cut the force down because I was afraid I would not be confirmed. When I appeared before the Council, I saw at once, by remarks made by the President, that he was opposed to the extension of the system beyond the one office. I informed the councillors that I had sent a thousand circulars and application blanks to manufacturers

and dealers in each of seven cities, or seven thousand in all. In reply I had received ninety-one applications, a little over one per cent, calling for five hundred and thirty-nine males and three hundred and one females, a total of eight hundred and forty persons. The largest number called for from any one city was two hundred and twenty-nine, and that city has never been likely to have one. The two cities making the most strenuous appeals for offices, called for one hundred and thirty-eight and one hundred and fifty-nine persons. I told the councillors that I was in favor, and had always been in favor, of extending the system throughout the State, but thought the experiment should be fully worked out in the first office before others were established. I stated that I had put aside one thousand dollars for other cities, and that when contemplated reductions in expenses were made that eight hundred dollars more would be available. I also claimed that bills for furniture and advertising paid out of the current year's appropriation should have been charged on the preceding year's; if this were done, one thousand two hundred dollars more would be available, or a total of three thousand dollars. What was my surprise to learn that the order of the Chief Executive for four new free employment offices had been rejected, the reason given being that *Chief Melton had said there was no money to establish them!* My confirmation was postponed, pending an investigation *suggested by the Chief Executive.* This was the first step in the plot; to put me before the public as opposed to new offices. No mention was made of the fact that three thousand dollars were available.

“For two years the tabulation of the State census had been going on in a building owned by the State, and

located near the State House. The work was nearly finished, and I suggested to the Chief Executive that the building be utilized for the Free Employment Office, and three thousand dollars in rent saved. He favored the proposition, and authorized me to make the transfer, and to notify the lessors that we would vacate the original quarters in a month. When the second rejection of my nomination took place the Chief Executive and councillors knew that six thousand dollars would soon be available for new offices, and all that was required to secure their establishment was their approval of the Chief Executive's order."

"And in spite of that knowledge they voted against you. Don't you think it was all arranged beforehand?"

"I am loath to believe it. The last time I saw the Chief Executive he declared that he was loyal to me, and that if he was forced to name a new man it would take weeks to find him."

"But it didn't take him one day, did it?"

"No. I was rejected for the second time on a Wednesday, at noon. Thursday was a holiday. My successor was nominated and confirmed before noon on Friday. My statement before the Council has never been given to the public except in a garbled and untrue form."

"Do you think the Chief Executive *was* loyal to you?"

"He said he was."

"I do not think his actions conform to his words. Why did he refuse a friend a vacation?"

"In a letter he intimated that I had had two months' notice since my name was sent in."

"But you had worked those two months, hadn't you? That was not a vacation. Did he mean that you should have known you were to be dismissed, and should

have made your plans accordingly? If that is so, he knew, when he said he was loyal to you, that you would not be confirmed."

"Perhaps so. I only know what the papers say. I have some of them here, and if you wish to hear them —"

"Certainly, I do. I am more interested in this matter than I ever was in a story. Why wouldn't it make a good story, Cousin Charlie?"

"I think it will. I may try my hand at it some day. Here is what one paper says: 'What is the unspoken objection to Charles Melton as the head of the bureau in which he has served for more than thirty years? Speak it out, gentlemen of the executive council. The people of this State believe the Chief Executive is wise in making this reappointment. If the Chief Executive and the people are mistaken they want to know why.'"

"Did they speak out?"

"Not a word. They simply clung to their sheet anchor — *extravagance!*"

"One paper draws a line between statistics and employment agencies; it says: 'No man who is fit to be the head of the statistical department will take it without protesting against being responsible for the employment bureau.' When the legislature met I was going to suggest the removal of the free employment office from the bureau."

Myrtle had been looking over the pile of clippings while listening, evincing the usual feminine impatience to grasp the entire subject at once. "Here is a good one," she exclaimed: "'The average citizen of the State has been under the impression that Chief Melton has been a faithful, efficient, and painstaking head of the office under his direction.'"

"Oh, this is funny. This paper says that the Chief Executive's letter is not complimentary to the President of the Council or the members who voted against you, and compares them to a surly animal under a wagon."

"That newspaper keeps a funny man. One of his best jokes was that my reputation as a statistician has been seriously impaired by the computations of the two amateurs in statistical investigation. Against that let me put the opinion of a veteran journalist who, in speaking of the courtesies extended by me to newspapers, wrote: 'In that respect the most that can be expected of his successor is that he shall come up to Chief Melton's standard' "

"Here's something else from that funny paper: 'Spinning romances may not be altogether congenial with the compilation of statistics but the two are not necessarily inconsistent or fatally antagonistic. Didn't Nathaniel Hawthorne add up figures in a custom house?'"

"I hope the fact that my successor wrote a biography of a Revolutionary hero will not interfere with or retard his statistical progress."

"This paper doesn't like the Chief Executive, does it?" asked Myrtle. "It says: 'Either he or the Council — or both — have given cause to be suspected of great insincerity. . . . If he has not influence enough over his official councillors to retain in office a man employed by the State for thirty years, and whom he goes out of his way to characterize as honest and competent, he is in a bad way politically.'"

"That paper is opposed to him politically, but opponents oftentimes tell the truth."

"What makes a man great, Cousin Charlie?"

"Usually a popular delusion, fostered for a special

purpose which may be a laudable one. It has, however, been truthfully said, that 'as we approach greatness, it becomes small.' It will hardly pay us, Myrtle, to go into this mass of testimony or opinion, commendatory as it may be. I have drawn off the salient lines in brief form, and they must finish the testimony of my witnesses. Then I shall sum up the case for my grand jury — the voters of the State."

"I am not a jurymen, then, for I can't vote."

"Myrtle,— women, like Warwick, form the power behind the throne. Now, for our consensus:

"The Chief Executive tries to be all things to all men, and like that sort of a man, in time is found out. His play with Melton has been uncovered. While naming Melton twice, it is now known that he knew that his mate, the President of the Council, the representative of the anti-labor manufacturers of the State, had the game put up to knock Melton down in the Council. Melton has been too fertile in his statistical aid to labor to please the narrow and arrogant manufacturers of the Home Market Club. He has been too willing to furnish statistical information for the labor unions.'"

"Were you, Cousin Charlie?"

"As I have already said, whatever I printed was on my own responsibility, and was not suggested or dictated by others. The Chief Executive, at the present time, is catering more strongly than I ever did, for the commendation and political support of these same trade unionists. "The trade unions passed many resolutions in favor of my confirmation, but I know that this worked against me with at least one councillor, and possibly more.

"One union declared that a fund had been raised by

the private employment agencies to defeat me. If they have such a fund it will probably be used to defeat the next appropriation for free offices.

"The editor of another paper says: 'The Chief Executive has earned an unenviable reputation as a man who will promise favors that he has no intention to grant. He has been known to assure delegations of his deliberate intention to give a place to the man in whose interest they had called upon him, when the papers for the appointment of another man had been duly made out.' "

Myrtle had been regarding an article headed by big black letters. "Why, Cousin Charlie, this paper says that the Chief Executive stated that as long as he held his office you should remain in your position, and it declares he said it to a big labor man."

"He never denied it himself, although his private secretary claimed that different language was used. As I understand it, however, the private secretary was not present at the interview, and the statement in the paper coincides with what was told me by a person who heard it from the big labor man himself. That finishes my case so far as witnesses are concerned."

"And what are you going to say?"

"Virtually what I have said before. It was thought that I was becoming too prominent, that I was getting too much credit for doing things. The work that I had done in favor of free employment offices, old-age pensions, the expansion of the State's manufactures, and the establishment of a system of industrial education for young persons, had created a public sentiment which could be made a valuable political asset. But I stood in the way. If I could be relegated to private life, my suggestions could be taken up

by the dominant party, as they have been. They are welcome to them. As the small boy said, when punished, 'they can't take away the good times I have had,' nor will the fact of my deposal, detract one iota from the credit which my friends and well-wishers consider is due me."

"But how will it all end, Cousin Charlie?"

"Only time can tell, Myrtle."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SAVED BY AN OLD LOVE.

"THE Testimonial" was hung on the wall. Mr. Dudley and the Committee had been invited to see it in position, and Grandpa and Grandma Melton were present. Huldah announced Mr. Carpenter.

"Ah, Miss Melton, I find you busy. A little reception in honor of the new business manager, I presume. I'm in haste, or I'd not intrude on your merry-making. Can I see you alone?" He bowed to the company, apologetically.

"As you probably wish to see me about a business matter, I will remain here."

"As you please, of course. I have brought the note for thirty thousand dollars, which I had misplaced. Can you accommodate me with a check?"

Dudley interfered: "We can find no record of any such note."

John turned to him: "Did you have charge of Mr. Melton's financial matters?" There was a sneer in the tone.

Dudley replied warmly: "No, sir, but at Miss Melton's request I have examined his private papers very carefully."

"Even then, you'd hardly be expected to know about all his speculations in bank stocks, and oil, and railroads. Business men usually keep those things quiet."

Tom kept his eyes fixed intently on "The Testimonial."

Myrtle objected to John's last remark: "I don't

believe my father speculated in any way. He told me he did not."

"What could have become of the thirty thousand dollars I loaned him on the first of May, and for which the note I hold is an extension for thirty days?"

"I do not know, Mr. Carpenter. We have been unable to find the first note. Will you allow me to see the one you have?"

John smiled: "When it is paid, it will become your property."

Dudley was incensed: "There surely can be no danger in allowing the lady to examine it. Do you think she intends to destroy it?"

Tom withdrew his gaze from "The Testimonial" and faced John:

"No, but somebody thinks he wrote it himself." Huldah grasped Tom's arm and drew him back.

"A forgery!" exclaimed Grandma Melton.

"Another Joe Maitland," said Grandpa with a chuckle, as he nudged his wife.

John was filled with virtuous indignation: "What do you mean, you vile slanderer?" He turned to Myrtle. "Do you countenance such language — to an old friend?"

Tom broke away from Huldah. "I ain't your old friend, nor a new one. I'll bet a thousand dollars, no, I'll make it ten, that you writ that note yourself in this very room, at that very table, with that very pen and ink; and I saw it on that very table, and I looked at it when I'd no business to, and I put some marks on it, so I could tell it again when it turned up. There now!"

Huldah whispered to Tom: "You've got yourself in a nice stew."

Dudley felt that the assertion must have some foundation. "What marks do you mean, Mr. Potter?"

Tom was earnest: "Let him put that note in Miss Melton's hands, and I'll tell *her*."

"That's but fair, Mr. Carpenter," said Myrtle.

John felt secure; "I can swear that very pen never wrote this note," he said, as he handed it to Myrtle.

Dudley addressed Tom: "Now, Mr. Potter, explain yourself."

"Well, you see, I've always been suspicious of that feller since he tried to kiss Huldah, and when I caught him at it, offered to give us money if we wouldn't tell you, Miss Myrtle."

Myrtle crimsoned: "I'm astonished, Mr. Carpenter."

"I'd have been ashamed to tell if he had," cried Huldah.

Tom went on with his story: "So when I saw that paper I looked at it, 'though it was none of my business — but suthin' prompted me,— and I saw it wasn't signed. So I just took a pin out of this ere pin-cushion, which Huldah gave me, and I punched a hole in the dog's eye, and one in the keyhole to the safe. Them pin holes is mighty small, Mr. Carpenter, but they're big enough to catch a rascal."

Myrtle held the note up to the light. "Please look at it, Mr. Dudley. I'm so excited, I cannot see distinctly."

Dudley examined the note carefully: "There are no pin holes in *this* note, Mr. Potter."

John took the note abruptly from Dudley's hand: "There, are you satisfied, Mr. Potter? Perhaps you will be gentleman enough to apologize for your slanderous remarks. I bear you no malice, for ignorance excuses much."

"No, by thunder," cried Tom: "I ain't ready to apologize just yet. I want Mr. Dudley to look at *this* piece of paper that I found in my letter from Mr. Melton." Tom passed it to Dudley. "When that's understood, perhaps something more than an apology will be needed from somebody."

"What new mare's nest have we now?" asked John.

"Taint no mare's nest — it's a carpenter's box that you'll find it mighty hard to get out of."

"What does the paper contain, Mr. Dudley?" asked Myrtle.

"It's the missing note."

"I never said that note had not been paid. Mr. Melton gave me another for it." John was reassured.

"It has a peculiar endorsement," said Dudley. "Written upon it, by Mr. Melton. I will read it."

This is the only note I ever gave for my personal use. I raised \$30,000.00 by it in order to pay off a mortgage on an estate which I intend to give to my daughter on her wedding day.

"What does that amount to?" cried John. "It means nothing."

Tom took a different view: "It means that the dead rises up to say you are a liar, and to prove that you are a forger!"

Grandpa Melton was struck with a resemblance: "Just like Joe Maitland for all the world."

"Hold your tongue, Pa Melton," and Mrs. Melton gazed searchingly at the alleged culprit.

There was a sound of heavy walking, and a heavy voice outside — the door was thrown — and Constable McCarty — now a civil officer instead of a militia private — entered, and cried: "Begorra! I've caught the rogue; I've got that man Deming in jail."

"We've got another one for you"—and Tom pointed to John.

John was not conquered: "I protest against such pre-judgment of my actions. How could I obtain a note and fill it out—forge it as you say, in Mr. Melton's handwriting—and what possible motive?"

"Your opportunity was found when alone in this room. I have examined Mr. Melton's note book and find two missing from the back of it."

"He must have spoiled one," said Tom.

"So might have Mr. Melton," retorted John.

"As to your motive," said Dudley, "you are best qualified to state it."

Tom thought he understood it: "All's fair in love! eh, Mr. Carpenter?"

John felt it was time to make a dignified retreat: "When your case against me is ready, you had better give it to some sharp lawyer. I am not afraid of the result. Good morning, all. With your kind permission I will go back to my hotel. You will find me in Room 36, when you want me."

He turned to leave. McCarty, who had been an interested listener, now spoke up: "Hotel is it? Room dirty-six! I was wonderin' where I'd seen that young man before. Wait a minute, young man." Carpenter sank into a chair, and regarded McCarty contemptuously. "Ah, yis! This very mornin' I dropped into Marvin's bar room to have a drop, for that fellow Deming had led me a divil of a chase through ditches and the likes o' that. While I was there, compassionatin' ould Marvin on his gouty toe, and the *nooralger* in his leg, and the *rumatics* in his back—he's jist used up intirely—little Teddy,

the porter, came down stairs and sez he, 'a man in dirty-six wants a pin and ink' — and just thin the stage druv up, and Teddy wint to take in the baggage, and ould Marvin sez he, 'McCarty' sez he, 'will yez carry the pin and ink,' sez he, 'to dirty-six.' Sez I, 'I will.' Divil a bit of paper did that young gintleman have —" and he pointed at Carpenter — "but a little scrap, 'bout as big as that Mister Dudley has in his hand there."

All looked at John, who bore their scrutiny unflinchingly. "Easily explained" said he, "I was making out a check to pay my hotel bill."

The face of each listener expressed disbelief in the explanation.

McCarty laughed: "Don't yez carry money enough to pay for one night's lodging?"

Grandpa said: "This is a matter for the law."

Grandma added: "Joe Maitland got ten years in jail — and he didn't try to cheat a woman!"

"And an orphan at that," put in Tom.

John saw a very narrow avenue of possible escape. He approached Grandma Melton: "Was your name Phenie Owen before you were married?"

"Yes it was. What of it?"

"You loved a man once named Joe Maitland."

"What's that to you? He's dead now!"

"No, not dead, but living. He is my father — James Carpenter. Read that letter, if you doubt my word."

Grandma Melton went to Myrtle, holding out the letter supplicatingly: "Oh, Myrtle. Just think of it. Mr. Carpenter is the son of my old lover, Joe Maitland, who committed forgery, and served ten years in jail. He is now an honest man. It will kill him if his son is sent to prison."

Grandpa Melton's thought was: "I wish the old man had never got out. Like father, like son."

John turned to Myrtle: "What is the charge against me? I make you a wedding present of the note." He tore it into small pieces and threw them upon the floor.

"Begorra!" cried McCarty, "he's destroyed the proofs, unless we can stick them together again."

"I have no charge to make against you, Mr. Carpenter," said Myrtle. "But I hope this affair will be a lesson to last you through life."

"It took his father ten years to learn it," grumbled Grandpa.

John's nerve did not fail him. "Good morning, all, *once more*. My dear Mrs. Melton, for your kind intercession in my behalf, I thank you. I have been saved by the strength of an old love. I have some letters of yours which I shall be happy to send you. They were written to Joe Maitland. As I never expected to find the writer, I read them. They were very interesting."

Grandpa Melton shook his fist at John, and drew Grandma away.

"I am happy to see that Mr. Melton's daughter is not going to grind down and starve her employees as her father did. Though his death was sad in some respects, it was a blessing to you all. There's no need for me to wish happiness to the coming brides and bridegrooms. I am sure everything will go as 'merry as a marriage bell.'"

The others paid no attention to John's insolence, but Tom could restrain himself no longer: "I think the sooner you go, the merrier we shall all be. Eh, Huldý?"

Huldý whispered to Tom: "Isn't he cheeky, though?"

"Ah, I almost forgot, my pretty 'princess.' The money you refused for that kiss —"

“You didn’t get —”

“Yes, that I didn’t get, owing to an unwelcome interruption, I will —”

Tom pointed to the door: “Buy yourself a halter with it, young man. Hang yourself just as soon as you get home. ’Twill keep you out of bad company in the future.”

As John left the room, Tom exclaimed: “That’s impudence, accordin’ to Tom Potter.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MILLENNIUM.

THE "den" had but two occupants — Myrtle and Cousin Charlie. The new book was completed and he was to return to the city that day. His books and papers were packed up, addressed, and ready for the expressman.

"How dismal it looks," said Myrtle. "I shall never come in here after you are gone."

"Do you think that is showing a proper respect for my memory?"

"Oh, I don't mean that, Cousin Charlie. I shall think of you every day, but I shall picture you at work —"

"My picture will be the same, but added to it will be my Cousin Myrtle, either listening to my troubles, or helping me get rid of them."

"I wish you could stay here and help me with some of my coming troubles. Sometimes I wish I had taken Grandpa's advice and sold the mills."

"Don't do it, Myrtle. You have begun well. Keep on. Show the world that woman's sense of justice, which is more acute than man's, and womanly sympathy are needed in industry, as a corrective of the money-grabbing spirit of the age."

"But father always kept his word. To do what you advise will be a constant reflection on my dead father."

"We must each bear the fruits of our own lives. His motive was business, and business means *profits*. You

are to be a humanitarian, and your motive must be to win profits with a proper regard for those who help you make them. Are you anxious to become a very wealthy woman?"

"No, decidedly, no. I have now much more than I actually need. If I become richer, to care for it will be a burden."

"Your husband may not think so."

"But Frank does." The color came to her cheeks.

"It is no secret, my dear. I heard the birds singing 'Frank' this very morning."

Myrtle laughed heartily: "Well, then, Frank thinks as I do. He has been poor, very poor, and the care of his mother and sister has left him little for personal gratification. He says he has always had contentment as his friend, even in adversity, and he has no wish to become a slave to money."

"Beware of the Money-God, my dear. He makes abject slaves of his victims, and blunts their finer feelings. The click of the stock-ticker falls upon attentive ears which are deaf to an orphan's cries. Once Mammon was typified by a Golden Calf—now his emblem is a Golden Man."

"Can the money power ever be broken?"

"Not broken, but relegated to its proper place as a servant, not a master. This can be done in one way. Each voter has a portion of the potentiality. His ballot can be made more powerful than the keenest sword, or the longest range firearm. With legislators pledged to humanitarian progress, the path is open and clear. The law of primogeniture in England has enabled the eldest sons to impoverish themselves and their God-given brothers and sisters. The consolidation of fortunes in this country

by trusteeships will work the same end in time. They should be forbidden, and either a graduated income tax, or, preferably, a just inheritance tax should give to the State for the benefit of *all*, a part of the wealth that *all* have helped to heap up in the coffers of millionaires."

"But, Cousin Charlie, how can I become a humanitarian?"

"You have already begun. Did you not tell Mr. Dudley to pay Mr. Hudson for all the time he was sick? I know a business house that has paid a man his salary for twelve years although he has done no work, having broken down from overwork while in service. When an employee gets too old to work, this same house pensions him for life."

"The State didn't set the example for them, did it?"

"Not as yet, but some day it will. Some of us are unfortunate in having been born too early, but think of our forefathers who missed enjoying electric lights, cars, telephones, and automobiles. Civil service pensions will be as common some day as military ones are now."

"What shall I do about Mr. Deming? Mr. McCarty is ready to indict him."

"Let me ask you a question, Myrtle. If you condone the crime of an intelligent rich man, why should you be less merciful to a misguided poor one?"

"I understand you. Although I believe Deming's acts hastened my father's death, I shall bring no charge against him. I can and will forgive him, and give him his old place in the mill."

"You are doing bravely, Myrtle. There will be no more strikes in the Melton Mills with such an owner. Let me tell you a true story by way of contrast: Down

South, somewhere, the colored cotton pickers thought sixty cents a hundred pounds was too low and they sent eight delegates to the planters to demand seventy-five cents."

"I hope they got it."

"They did — on their bare backs — in the shape of a whipping — result, the price is still sixty cents per hundred pounds."

"They were brutal."

"No, not them — it was the Money-God — they were simply his followers, his devotees, his unthinking instruments. But for his merciless rules, they would have met the delegates in a friendly manner, and have given, if they had them, good reasons for not allowing the increase."

"What is socialism, Cousin Charlie?"

"The foundation of socialism is a demand for justice — a more equitable distribution of the results of capital and labor. Its fundamental idea is often lost sight of by its too zealous disciples who think the overthrow of capital will help them. They might as well say that turning the earth's surface into sand would help agriculture and the farmer. No, true socialism requires a union of capital and labor, but, unfortunately, the business men of the present generation are not the ones to bring it about, and the arm of the law is strong enough to prevent attempts to secure it by force. Upton Sinclair, the author of *The Jungle*, says the ballot is the socialist's strongest weapon. Our Constitutions and laws protect him in the right to use that weapon as his reason or interest may dictate. So, the battle becomes political, rather than industrial. The leaven is working. Even college professors are declaring that conscienceless rich men are doing more to advance socialism than its own advocates."

“Father always denounced socialism.”

“Yes, the word is a *bugaboo* to many. Let us drop it, and use *Justice* instead. It has a sweeter sound, and means just as much. Did you ever read a socialist paper?”

“No.”

“Here is an extract from one. It will make you think of the days that preceded French Revolution. Read it aloud, and between the lines. Don’t be frightened by the vehemence of the language. Think only of what the words mean.”

Myrtle read:

You have allowed a handful of men to possess themselves of the means whereby you get your daily bread.

Owning the necessities of your life, they own you.

They own you just as much as if you were slaves to be put in chains and set upon the auction block.

They bid you come, and you come; they bid you go, and you go.

They bid you where you shall live, and how you shall live; where you shall work, and how you shall work. They shut you up in factories and sweat-shops, and stifle you with poisonous gases; they choke you and crush you in the mines; they tear you to pieces in machines; they burn you up in railroad wrecks, and theatres, and steamboats, for their profit.

They compel you to work long hours for their profit; they compel you to pay high prices for their profit.

You can neither ride nor walk, eat nor sleep, labor nor rest, laugh nor cry, without paying them tribute. You have to pay them to live; you have to pay them to die.

If you wish to wear clothing, they tax you for the clothing; if you wish to go naked, they put you in jail.

They compel you to build palaces and hovels. They take the palaces for themselves and send you to live in the hovels.

And they charge you rents for the hovels.

And from time to time they raise the rents.

They compel you to make silks and rags.

They wear the silks and throw the rags to you.

And they despise you because you are ragged.

They compel you to build jails and then put you in them.

And while you are there they sell your labor.

They compel you to make guns, and then they shoot you with them.

And then they tax you to pay for the militia.

They take your children from the schools and force them to slave in factories.

They take your daughters from your homes and force them to slave in brothels.

They work you until you are useless and then fling you into the gutter.

When their horses and dogs grow old, they make you take care of them. When YOU grow old they let you starve.

They own all the instruments and means of production. They own the railroads and the telegraphs, the coal mines and the oil fields, the factories and the stores.

They own half the farms, and they have mortgages on the rest.

They own society.

THEY OWN THE GOVERNMENT.

Your forefathers left you a democracy. A democracy is a government in which the people rule. They have overthrown the democracy.

They have accomplished a revolution by bribery.

They have destroyed "A government of the people, by the people, for the people." They have set up "A government of the people, by the rascals, for the rich."

The senators of your country in Washington are their paid attorneys. The aldermen of your cities are their office boys.

They make the laws in the legislatures; they enforce them in the executives; they interpret them in the courts.

There is no man in office in the United States to-day who does not serve them. Any man who does not serve them they put out of office.

Myrtle was silent for a moment. Then she asked:
"Did *they* put you out, Cousin Charlie?"

"Some people say they did. I may know some day. But it is nearly train time. I wish you success and happiness, Myrtle. I will come to the wedding."

As they stood at the door, Myrtle had a final question to ask: "Cousin Charlie, what are you going to call your book?"

"My first thought was to call it 'The Millennium,' but if my publishers are satisfied, I shall name it —

'LABOR; OR, THE MONEY-GOD! WHICH?'"

THE END.